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THE
COURSE OF DIVINE LOVE.

AN INCENTIVE
TO
PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

BY
F. FITZGERALD, ESQ.,
AUTHOR OF "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN," ETC., ETC.; EDITOR OF THE "AFRICAN TIMES."

"God is love."—JOHN iv. 8.

"Creation is Christ developed. Every object speaks of Christ, and reflects His beauty, His excellence, and love. A chord of Love runs through all the sounds of creation, but the ear of Love alone can distinguish it."—Dr. CUMMING.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."—JOHN xiv. 15.

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P R E F A C E.

I know by personal experience that the Holy Word of God can never be read aright, until it is regarded as the Revelation of Eternal Love to the human soul—as intended, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of the Apocalypse, to set forth the “Course of Divine Love” with the human race. To the heart and mind that have received this great truth, there is no obscurity in any one of its pages, beyond what must necessarily be felt by the finite in presence of the Infinite. Light is continually flooding in, and making luminous every separate link of the unbroken chain of Love. And perhaps this work would never have been published, had I not received the encouraging evidence that its contents might, by God’s blessing, be made the instrument for enabling some hearts to see that light, which had previously found all dark, uninviting, and uninteresting. One

who read a portion of the manuscript said, in reluctantly returning it, "Until now I never could comprehend the Bible ; but since I have read your work, I understand and love it." I have therefore thought, that it might be God would so honour me, as to make it a message of Love to some other hearts ; and that it was my *duty* to publish it, which I now do in great weakness, praying that HE may so bless it ; and may make it also a means of calling the attention of some of my fellow countrymen and fellow Christians, to the public perils, as well as the private sufferings, which seem to me to be impending in these so long highly-favoured realms—the punishments that wait on scorned mercies and neglected duties.

F. FITZGERALD.

LONDON : 120, STOCKWELL PARK ROAD,

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THE COURSE OF DIVINE LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

LOVE! Wondrous Soul of Eternity! Name unutterably precious to the hearts of Mortals seeking after Immortality! boldly mayst thou appear at the head of pages intended to set forth some of thy sublimity and grandeur, before which all the hosts of heaven, with their matchless derived powers, are but as a single glowworm in comparison with the sun; for the great hand of God himself hath inscribed thy blazing letters on every ray of that transcendent glory which surrounds His eternal presence. The poor conceits of this world, which seem, when thou art forgotten, to be of such vast importance to perishing children of the earth; the wretched things in which, when thou art absent

from their souls, frail human beings so vainly trust, may need the blinding mist of some high exordium to conceal their real nothingness, even as the small predatory Arab bands in the desert surround themselves with a cloud of dust, to veil their numerical weakness ; but thou, O Love Divine !—thou who art the constant burden of the songs of millions of brilliant seraphs—thou who appearest in characters of burning flame, stamped on the illimitable vault of heaven, and on the pure cerulean throne of God—*thou* whom the great Redeemer of mankind declared to be the very essence of Divinity—thou hast no poverty that needs concealment—no weakness that should shrink from the gaze of mortal eye.

May I not rather fear, that even in catching but the faintest ray of thy transcendent glory, all will become but too painfully sensible of the feebleness of him who now calls on them to turn their eyes toward thee. There is no human heart that hath not some chord that vibrates to thy name. Excepting that mysterious worker of evil, whose wiles banished thy sweet enchantment from the earthly garden that God had planted for His new-made creatures, thou hast part in all existence. Yet will I hope rather than fear, for I am nothing, and my

theme is all, hope that even as thou hast made my soul to swim in the effulgence of thy glory, so thou wilt bathe their souls in beauty, and make them also to feel, that thou only canst reveal to the human heart those wonders of thy loveliness, which language vainly struggles to describe; and that words, though sought in the richest treasures, seem rather to conceal than to display.

But though all may feel, not on all is the faculty bestowed of concentrating and diffusing, however faintly, the rays that fall from heaven upon the soul. All human minds are, undoubtedly, mirrors; but there is among them a multitudinous diversity in polish, in surface, and in capacity. Some are dark as dismal Hades; some are clear and bright as southern skies; while others are so foully smeared, distorted, and bent by sin, that an angelic visage may be reflected as demon hideous to behold. It were difficult among millions to find two that in all things resemble. And is not this the cause of much of that evil and suffering that falls to the lot of man, before Divine grace hath taught the soul to raise her longing eyes to the bright realms of heaven whence she came, instead of persisting in a vain and erring search among things of earth? It is to

thee alone, O Love, eternal Love ! that I look, to find me words of fire for thoughts that burn, for strength to tell what thou alone hast revealed. Oh, let me not in aught resemble the parched and barren wilderness, where the rich clouds of heaven pour forth in vain their copious floods, remaining ever dry, arid, and barren, yielding no refreshing drop, no grateful shade to the thirsty and fainting traveller ; but let me rather be like the healthy, fruitful tree, whose nurtured root repays with abundance the bounty it receives.

Since the fall of man from innocence and truth, his heart has become the prey of every evil thing. It is full of dark caverns, inhabited by monster reptiles of the "nether world ;" and it is only through the light of Divine Love pouring into it, whose brightness they cannot abide, that he can be restored to any degree of resemblance with what his first parents were, when fresh from the pure and holy hands of their Almighty Creator. But when that flood of heavenly brilliance *does* enter the heart, its most foul and noisome caverns may become sparkling and beautiful palaces ; that dark central spot where Satan was enthroned, may be a gorgeous temple. While the hosts of evil retain sole and

undisputed possession, they poison its atmosphere by their filthiness, and make the soul the slave and minister of sin. Held fast captive in their polluting bonds, the bright and glorious heaven which is her inheritance, is closed against her as with brazen skies. Her garments all are sullied. Every time she touches her fetters she receives some new defilement; until, vile with stains, all trace of heaven in her lost and destroyed, she becomes enamoured of what debases her; and the bright gifts she has received as her dower are either in a state of torpor, or perverted, or wandering feebly in some devious and erring way.

But when Love comes with her Divine light, showing to the guilty, fallen, fettered, polluted thing, the precious blood that was shed on Calvary for her redemption, enabling her by faith to receive that great salvation thus purchased for her, her heavenly desires return. She is no more the willing slave. The filthy bonds have no longer charms for her. Every stain she had contracted is gone. Her sins, though red like crimson, have been made as snow. She is pure! and what joy is hers as she gazes on her pearly robes! She spreads her silver wings. Love, that makes her bold, hath rent for her the

brazen sky that concealed the way to the eternal throne. She longs to mount : her thoughts are all above ; she feels that the joys of heaven are her rapturous inheritance. Upward she soars : she sinks in prayer and praise at her Redeemer's feet ; and implores that Love, with her bright light, may ever henceforth dwell in her. Faith born anew, hope revives, joy is brilliant, sweet charity has her radiant smile, humility and obedience walk hand in hand, and she is enraptured with her purity.

Alas ! alas ! that she cannot always retain this blessed condition. While on earth she will have constantly to struggle with her old enslavers. These will never cease their endeavours to regain an absolute dominion, and may often lead her captive for a season, against her will, to her deep and bitter grief ; to sorrow, shame, and chastisement ; but she has had thus a foretaste of that eternal joy, which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

There is a natural thirst of love in the human heart, and it seeks for what it wants in the things that surround it. I have often thought that the warm caresses of the mother, as she strains her little bud of life, and hope, and joy to her glowing lips and her fond heart, while thus she revels in her

happiness, first wakes the dormant fire of love in the baby breast. Look at her and her child in their fancied solitude, when she is unrestrained by any consciousness of an intrusive eye or ear. Her lips rain laughing kisses ; a joyous fire streams from her radiant eyes ; her glowing fingers run around the heart, and thrust themselves, and play and wanton in every pretty dimple. Baron Humboldt relates that the *Gymnoti* (electrical eels) in the river Orinoco, when excited by horses driven into the stream, press against the sides of the intruders, and, discharging their electric battery, make the wonderful influence of their mysterious fluid felt through every member and in every vein of the animal. Even so the flashing eye of the fond, excited mother, those glowing lips, those rapid roving fingers, the soft warm sigh, pour from head to foot in one continuous stream their kisses and their fire, until the charmed infant feels through all its veins the magic power of that magnetic flood ; and the plunging limbs, the mouth, the cheek, the eye, all proclaim that whether inherent or inoculate, the germ of passions and sympathies is there, and from this moment active and alert, waiting but the development of mental and physical powers for their more potent exhibition.

May it not be that since love is *thus* first awakened or imparted in the fair, rosy morning of life—that since it is thus first known to us through touch and sense, and not by any voluntary, spontaneous action—it is therefore we search for it in combination with some like form—that we require physical demonstration of its existence, and lose the great and sublime truth that it is of heavenly origin? I have noticed that children of really fond and loving parents—children of passion, and thus fondly and passionately caressed in infancy—always grow up peculiarly accessible to similar influences; peculiarly avid in their search of happiness through the medium of that combination of the visible and invisible which is in us; and that, even where there is great strength of character, the latter is tinged, softened, and modified by that strange invisible controlling influence. I have similarly remarked that uncaressed children, the offspring of unloving parents, show an absence of that sensibility which characterises the former; and that the harder features of their disposition, not thus softened, modified, or controlled, exhibit themselves in an iron inflexibility, an unsympathising coldness, and often in an inveterate, unsparing selfishness. I think that all those loving, passionate caresses, are

registered in the *feeling*, though not in the *consciousness* of the heart ; and exercise a potent influence in the future life of the individual. In like manner, the simple prayers of childhood are often quite unthought of and unremembered ; yet they exercise a power. The spark of grace was, perhaps, lodged with them ; and enfolded in them, it waits but the destined moment of its soul-ennobling, sin-subduing power ; even as the seed that the husbandman hath hidden beneath the soil, is preparing the future wealth and loveliness of the plain.

Starting with this hypothesis, I may say that the compound being who has been subject in infancy to the power of such peculiar influences, goes but too frequently, when starting in the pursuit of bliss, in the path where many sorrows lie hid. God has revealed to the human heart, that what human nature thus demands—*Love*—is the great end of man in being ; and He has plainly pointed out the road that leads to its eternal home. But the adventurer too often “stumbles on the threshold.”* Alas ! he may then have to go far and wide, through bog, over

* In olden times a stumble on the threshold was considered so indicative of disaster, that men abandoned journeys they were about to commence when it happened.

barren heath and moor, through gloom and darkness, in a long, vain, and fruitless search. *Religion*, perhaps, was there, waiting to direct his earliest step. Noble, beauteous, grave—with her earnest air, her calm, sweet, placid smile, so calculated to prevail and win him, were not man the dupe and slave of the powers of evil—she looked expectingly, holding before his eyes God's Word of Life, pointing to heaven, with its endless joys, and with seraphic voice tendering him her blessed aid. But, alas! his eye had caught *Imagination's* gaudy attire—her golden hair's luxuriant wantonness floating round her seductive form—her light feet, that seemed scarcely to touch the earth as she bounded toward him with her joyous laugh, sending him her kisses from lips as fragrant as the Eastern rose. In vain did Religion strive. The syren looked delicious meaning—hung on his neck, charmed him with her laughing sighs, placed her coronal on his brow, making a bed in his bosom for her own, and while she was pouring there her voluptuous kisses round his heart, *Fancy*, her cheating sister, whispered, "This is Love." Religion wooed in vain;—he stumbled—Imagination became his treacherous guide.

It was thus with one I knew. Love was for him

a necessity of life—an intense thirst. For awhile he lived almost entirely within himself, visited, caressed by the most beautiful ethereal semblant of humanity, that was ever presented to the mental vision of the most enraptured enthusiast. Existence was thought, not action. But there was no grief that did not find his heart and hand ready for its succour. He was full of the tenderest sympathies, even toward the smallest insect that was innocuous. The visible creation, with its constant changes, having ever some new grace to reveal, exerted a profound influence over him. The abundance, the vast variety of its charms, rendered it impossible they should satiate. Its Protean humours made it doubly dear to him. He loved it when all was bright and smiling, nor did he love it less when all was clouded. Dear to him was the soft golden hour of dewy morn, when gems were hanging on every leaf and spray; when the greensward was so sparkling with loveliness it seemed as if the fairies had been holding there their midnight revels, and dropped their jewels in the dance—a wealth such as the greatest of this world never possessed. At other times he would imagine that day had surprised them in their enjoyments—that they could then no longer flee—that they were

there reclining sportively on every trembling blade of grass—that those brilliant flashes were their piercing eyes, as rocked to and fro by morn's soft dallying breeze, they gazed laughingly at the fascinated mortal who was enraptured with their beauty. How fondly he walked with what men call "Nature," when the heavy rain like mists of autumn, strung the filmy, englutinous snare of the spider with its lustrous diamonds—when the first bright sunbeams found the pure white frosted snow, or the glow of pendent jewels made every wooded glen resemble the genii's garden.* When nature is thus looked upon with an eye of love, Love's beauteous hand is visible everywhere ; her smiles, her bewitching motions, her enchanting grace are always there, but in most especial power from the moment when the first blade of grass rises beneath the footsteps of fair spring, until the latest sheaves of autumn are borne on the groaning waggons to the fast-filling barn, whose portentous door, like the farmer's swelling heart, is shouting for abundance. Who can have failed to confess the peculiar charm in that first tender green with which she decks the mead, and in

* "Arabian Nights" (Aladdin).

those bright flowers that soon bespangle it, as the balmy breath of spring floats the hue of death from her lately saddened face? Oh, there are crowds of treasured memories now thronging in my heart! Can you not see with me those fair white beauties on their emerald bed, with many a lovely bride's bright, rosy lips,* that seem to make the waving grass thrill and tremble with delight as it touches them, while they bend so gracefully, lowering their sweet heads, offering their charms again and again to its soft kisses; and the breeze murmurs as it steals softly along, whispering its regrets, and quitting with many a sigh, so enraptured is it with their dalliance? There was no day in spring, summer, autumn, winter, that had not its charms, for Love, bounding or creeping, is ever constantly at work. The varied sunsets in these northern climes furnished a continual feast; and among the glorious orbs of night he worshipped her. What he loved in her was the love that is her soul. But, alas! Imagination, who had become his guide, is too false and treacherous ever to lead to God. God in him was pure idea, and not a living reality. He thought he loved Him. He found

* Daisies, white and fringed.

Him everywhere beneficent and lovely ; but he could not find Him—He was never near in prayer. In the burning deserts of the East, amid the snows of Etna, as well as in the smallest, meanest flower on the earth, he saw His hand and he felt His influence. The reason worshipped Him—the otherwise proud spirit knelt to Him. But, alas ! His throne was never erected in the heart, and in Himself alone he never loved Him.

When the Day-spring from on high did visit him—when to the bitterness of repentance for sin, succeeded the sweet assurance of reconciliation through the precious blood of Christ—then Love, for the first time, really revealed herself in her heavenly character to the soul. And to what shall I compare the joy ? To that of the wretched slave in the diamond-mines of Brazil who finds a stone so precious as to ensure his pardon, to redeem his forfeit life, and set him free ? To that of the anxious mariner who, when tossed upon the raging, tempest-stirred ocean, ignorant of his exact position, and hearing the furious roar of breakers on a rock-strewn beach, discovers suddenly, piercing the gloom profound in which he has been enveloped, a feeble gleam that tells of safety in some neighbouring

port? To that of the impatient savage, whose expectant eye is watching with straining eagerness for the first faint solar gleam that shall penetrate his long, drear Arctic night, when he beholds the blessed harbinger, the unfailing promise of protracted day? No! Great and rich, doubtless, are such joys; difficult for language to describe. But a fine grain of ocean sand cannot be put in comparison with this huge world's bulk; neither can those with that pure spiritual joy, which a sense of pardon and reconciliation with heaven can bestow, when peace is whispered to the soul, the treasury of heavenly bliss is opened, and the mystery of eternal love is disclosed. The soul penetrates the unseen world, and revels in its immortality. It feels it is a glorious thing of light, long imprisoned in realms of darkness; Love, whose effulgence fills the heavenly skies, floods in upon it with her glory. The tenement of clay basks in the ethereal sunshine. Its undying Bride brings down to it the fire of endless life, and no vulture, rock, or chain awaits it. That fire is *love*—the sole light of heaven, flowing incessantly from God, its brilliant, eternal, and omnipotent Source.

What I desire to do, by the aid of Love, is to show some rays of that splendour which beautifies the illimitable space, as they appear in the work of creation ; and as they beneficently pursue the fallen, guilty, ruined sons of Adam.

CHAPTER II.

CREATION.

How keenly sensible of its feebleness, the mind imprisoned in visible matter becomes, when it attempts to penetrate the mysteries of an eternal spiritual existence ! and yet how strong a proof is afforded of *whence it came*, by its so ardently striving to do so ! Brother in Christ Jesus ! reader ! mount with me on the wings of Love, to that centre of inconceivable glory where God is said especially “ *to dwell*,” environed by a splendour that it would dismay the mind even to attempt to contemplate, did it not feel that it is formed with the benignant rays of Love herself. The period has arrived at which the Everlasting God, the Almighty Lord, the Universal Father, the Spirit, and the Word—that incomprehensible, eternal Triad, constituting one only and indivisible Divinity ; whose habitation is that infinitude of expansion and duration, the vast eternity, which hath no boundaries, no limits of time or

space—when He, the Author of all matter, and the Source of all life and light, hath determined to announce His gracious purpose, of calling into form and order this earth that we inhabit. From that wondrous sphere of His concentrated glories, where He is said to have “built His temple and to have fixed His throne,” whence depart those eternal rays, that first gave and that continue to feed in myriad suns that gem the bosom of unbounded space, the brilliance with which they light up some fair nature dependent on them for beauty, colour, and other constituents of its perfection—the great I AM, whom the fond, admiring gaze of million upon million of glorious angels ever seeks with rapture, thus proclaims His will :—

We form another world ! Another gem
Shall deck eternal Love's bright diadem.

But for the Divine spark within us, how should mortal beings even attempt to form the faintest idea of the sweetness of the accents of that mighty voice, whose melody thrills the angel of the farthest star, and fills all heaven with augmented joy ? For there is a precious link, that unites creating Love with pure created spirits. They are all bright emanations from Divinity—they are all, like it, immortal—and sin

not having impaired the sympathy, they respond to every impulse of the eternal mind. There is no celestial being but becomes thus instantaneously cognizant of the proclaimed Divine intention. Every angelic bosom swells with rapture—every cherub, every seraph recounts the former triumphs of Love's hand—and the universal voice ascribes new honour to Jehovah's name. The emerald glory round the eternal throne becomes more lustrous ; the sheen of that pure sapphire throne's eternal light becomes more dazzling than the eyes of the heavenly hosts had ever beheld ; Divinity seems to have augmented its own charms ; and all heaven rings with the harmonious rejoicing of ten thousand millions of angelic beings.

When creative Love, dwelling in the bosom of the Almighty God, commences some new wonder of its eternal purpose, there is no pause or rest until it become a visible reality, and take its place among that extended host which has emanated from the same source, and each of which has in turn been the admiring theme of angel tongues. Nor is it possible for creative Love ever thus to work, without a general expectation of some new stupendous mystery. As the rich streams of creative Love are sent forth

charged with their mighty mission, every angel form seems to expand and increase in beauty, in presence of those augmented charms of the Divine glory. The sparkling soul of that boundless, illimitable space is Love ; those angels are a portion of this soul ; the glowing link between them and the great Source from which they came has never been severed ; and united with, and receiving ever thus from its effulgence, they sympathise with its every change. Love, whose concentrated power is enthroned on high, is the eternal light of God. Even as the warm blood, that vehicle of vitality in man, speeds on its mystic task—descends, ascends, is borne to feet and brain—fulfils its assigned function, then returns, warming and vivifying the entire system by one continuous impulse of the heart,—so the sustaining power of Almighty Love pursues its endless course, throughout the bright and glorious realms of love-embellished space. It embraces all things in its marvellous path—suns, worlds, angels, all creation. It maintains the destined motion of all organized matter, and circles back with undiminished efficacy to that great centre, its eternal source—for ever there, yet ever engaged on its wondrous errand, and never enfeebled in one single ray, though lighting millions

of suns, and constituting and maintaining the brightness of the heavenly world.

Will it not be through a similar exercise of that sympathetic power, which causes every seraph to kindle with increasing joy as creative Love goes blazing forth on its mighty errand, that the Almighty wrath, which is nothing more than Love rejected, will illumine every guilty soul with overwhelming truth in that great and awful day of God's judgments? Is not this the "opening of the books" that shall then take place?—*a ray of the eternal consciousness traversing every trembling and affrighted soul*, causing it to pronounce its own judgment in exact accordance with the light of that great Spirit from which it is an emanation?

God creates. As an inevitable consequence, all existing things rejoice. Creation is the highest attribute of God, and shows His love in its richest and noblest form. The power *to make*, is inherent in the power *to be*. It is a portion of, and it is inseparable from, an eternal Divinity. Without that power, God would have remained solitary in His grandeur: not one angel near His throne; with nothing to behold—nothing to occupy His existence—the sole occupant of illimitable space. It is,

therefore, most undoubtedly the very essence of the Divine existence ; and its employment, while it proclaims the God, at the same time amplifies His joy, because, having made it a self-imposed necessity, His chiefest bliss must consist in it. As He has constituted Love this active principle, His eternal will must necessarily be governed by it. Unchangeable, its exercise can never cloy ; vast, like Himself, it must be ever in activity ; and eternal, like Himself, it can never die. To create is, therefore, His essential sovereign pleasure—a portion of His endless state, while a fount of bliss for all that He has previously created.

We form another world ! Another gem
Shall deck eternal Love's bright diadem.

Love is already at her work ; the eternal purpose is already in course of fulfilment. The proclamation and the action are simultaneous. All heaven attendant waits to behold the new promised marvel of creating Love. The Spirit of God is seen moving on the face of the dark waters that envelop this earth, “without form and void”—an ample guarantee of approaching loveliness. But hark ! the Divine voice—“ Let there be light ! ” and the aqueous globe appears glittering in the first rays it receives,

while God pronounces it "good,"* and designates henceforth the light "day," and its absence "night."† Can heaven be silent while such a work as this is in progress? Angel and seraph, harp and voice, and shouts of rapture, make the huge vault of heaven resound with praise; while rich clouds of incense rise from golden censers before the throne, where the elders cast their crowns, and ascribe all honour, might, and power, and glory to the Universal Lord, the Eternal King. ‡

The world's first day is ended as songs of praise proclaim the heavenly joy.

What shall angel voices sing
But thy praise, Almighty King?
To Thy love ourselves we owe,
With Thy love alone we glow;
What in us appears so bright
Is but Thy reflected light.

Holy, holy, holy King,
From Thy love what wonders spring!
Still Thy hands Thy realms adorn—
Lo! another world is born.
What though waters yet be there,
Thou dost form—it must be fair.

Spirits, to your mighty King
Let your censers incense fling;

* Gen. i. 4. † Gen. i. 5. ‡ Rev. iv. 10, 11.

Let the fragrant cloud ascend,
While before the throne we bend.
What can angel voices sing
But the glories of their King !

But oh, how the heavenly harmony peals through space, as God commands this new wonder of Love's hand to receive the gift of her enchanting sky !

"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."—(*Gen. i. 6—10.*)

Obedient to the mandate, a pure, imponderous element grows around it; the superabundant fluids are driven off; and the before-imprisoned world is free. The light, clear, ambient air, designed to be the feeding atmosphere of life, receives the rays from distant orbs in space. Earth hath now a part in heaven's wide firmament, and the work of terrestrial separation proceeds. The waters have their appointed bounds; the dry ground appears; the obedient fluid fills the deep channels it is henceforth to occupy, and quits the mountains, valleys, hills, and plains of earth. The sea is formed. And now, in continuous progression of these mighty marvels, Love commences those exquisite triumphs of her power, which make the face of earth so rich with beauty. As she passes over it her wondrous hand,

a tender grass springs up, enchanting in its emerald hue ;* while tree and shrub, plant, fruit, and flower burst into existence, crowding enchantments for the eye with an amplitude of profusion that astonishes the angelic host. Air participates in this bounty ; for, emanating from such floral wealth, a delicious fragrance loads it. From the verdant hills descend pellucid streams, that traverse the plains in silver bands, as they roll their liquid treasures toward the sea ; while Love's fair fingers are giving its sweet hue to the violet, and placing in the beauteous rose its rich and precious perfume. Wherever her hand now passes, bright colour grows beneath it. The lustrous trees are adorned with lovely blossoms, and with rich and charming fruits of every hue, single or blent, known in the transparent stones of the temple of the living God ; while over them she spreads a marvellous bloom, that makes the dark seem lucent, and softens what were otherwise too richly red. Nor is the beauty thus bestowed a mere fleeting thing. All are charged with reproducing seed, the germs of future life. Beauty, fragrance, with a provision for a constant increase in every herb and tree, plant,

* Gen. i. 11—13.

fruit, and flower, show how rich Love is in her gifts,
and how enduring they are in their nature and their
charms. As angels gaze, they praise !

Fountain of life, and light, and love !
To Thee we bring,
Sovereign of these bright realms above,
Eternal King !
The homage of the creatures Thou hast formed
Thy mighty power
The dark, the drear, the desolate hath warmed ;
And world and flower,—
The vast, the scarce perceptible,—
Rich wonders of Thy love reveal.
When from Thy glowing hand we sprang,
And at Thy throne
The praise of Love Divine we sang,
On us alone
Thy dazzling beauty poured its golden stream ;
But soon Thy might,
Through void dark space set glorious suns to gleam,
And banish night ;
As this third day of yon fair globe,
Sees her clad in glittering robe.
Ours is the bliss of Being ;
Thus before Thee,
All Thy loving bounties seeing,
To adore Thee ;
Songs of joy through endless ages singing ;
Holy ! holy !
Incense on Thy golden altar flinging ;
Holy ! holy !
Source of power, fount of glory,
Heaven's unnumbered hosts adore Thee !

How surpassingly beautiful is this newly-formed or renewed world, in the splendour of that rich profusion of her verdant and floral birth ! But though she hath a part in the firmament, she hath not yet received the place assigned her by the Eternal Mind ; and the light in which her beauties are rejoicing, descends immediately from the eternal throne on her fair and lovely face. But the work of preparation now complete, she is impelled by the Almighty hand until she feels the potent charm of that glowing sun, from which she is to receive perpetual light and warmth.* He hath bound her in a moment to his radiant car, although the chain be a chain of love. She darts through space ; but controlled to a sure, harmonious action. Although he exercise his power from afar, it is impossible she should ever betray his splendid love, for she is wed to him, and destined to move around him with a constant thirst of his glory. Revolving on her axis, she will present all her charms in their turn to greet her Husband-King, that they may bask in his glowing warmth. Wherever his beams are felt, there will she find her joyous day ; wherever her face is hidden

* Gen. i. 14—19.

THE COURSE OF

From him there will she mourn his absence, and it
will be her right. In her unceasing round, he will
rule and control her seasons; and summer, winter,
autumn, spring, must depend for ever on his smiles,
while each full revolution will mark the close of her
unvarying year; unvarying, for though she revolve
through all eternity, she can never slacken in her
swift pace of love. And now, O beautiful provision
of an indulgent Creator, that she may not too deeply
grieve through all her long hours of night, Love
bestows on her a handmaid, who shall yield to her
her Husband-King's reflected light. As she is
governed by him, so shall this be ruled by her, and
round her shall its track lie—in attendance, faithful
like her own, bound with her in the same annual
path, yet never receiving one of her husband's smiles,
save to transmit it for her consolation and relief in
his nocturnal absence. Is not this, indeed, a munifi-
cence of Love? The glorious sun, the gentle,
modest moon, so acting on the great waters that
they shall ever be in equable motion—stars linked
with that same chariot—rays sent from myriad orbs
that gem the firmament—behold an ample dower.
Adorable—ever, ever adorable—is Divinity!
Fitted now to receive her breathing life, once

more doth the ardent blaze of the Almighty fall direct upon her. It had formed her air, pounded her rocky surface, adorned her with her beauteous robes, and conducted her to her bright Husband-Sun's less brilliant bed. Now she shall teem with life. Creative Love descends upon the waters. She issues her commands :—

“Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”—(*Gen. i. 20—22.*)

The work accompanies the word. The waters move obedient ; enormous whales are lashing the now foamy surface ; fishes innumerable charm the vast sea with life—great and small, swimming within its waters, or basking or crawling beneath or on its shores ; creatures swift and mighty—creatures delicate and tender, beauteous in their tinted hues, scaly and crustaceous—matter and water blending in amorous delight, to fulfil the Divine command of aqueous life. And while this fruitful combination thus fills the sea with motion and beauty—while vigorous fins cleave the yielding floods, and darting fish pursue their almost trackless course—bright-plumed beauties rise on wings of flashing brilliance, and traverse

the lighter fields of air. Ever as they spring from the obedient waters, Love sheds her light upon them, and they glow with loveliness. Gold, crimson, green, and varying blue adorn them ; they gleam among the lilies of the gentle river and through the laden trees, enjoying the first banquet of this new-made world. Nor is theirs a voiceless joy. Not only are they enriched with beauty, but Love, who taught the seraphs round the throne of God, fills this feathery brood of earth and sea with delicious song. The trilling lark soars boldly in the sky, and charms the listening air ; echo, new born, repeats the strain ; and myriad throats swell with their varying tribute. Silence is banished for ever from the fair face of earth, and joy and gladness revel on her plains. God is well pleased, and directs that they shall multiply and fill the earth with splendour and with song. With soft emotion they receive this loving mandate. Bird seeks bird : they pair ; a wondrous instinct guides them—a marvellous sympathy attracts and binds them. All-powerful Love fills every tree with voices, as they search for mate and home ; while the richest bursts of song charm their nuptial banquets, and give evidence of the exuberance of their delight. Ye dazzling things of air !

yours is the first repast—yours are the first nuptials of a new creation ; your tuneful voices have been the first to break with gushing melody the silence of the earth—to wake the tuneful echoes, and ascend on high in praise. Let it be ever your honour that the lords of earth shall confess that food, love, and song were yours on her fifth day, ere yet the dust of the earth had been moulded into human form, and the breath of life been breathed into the nostrils of their marvellous clay !

Shall earth thus sing, and heaven be mute before the eternal throne !

Welcome, welcome here above
Those sweet sounds of earthly love ;
Welcome, welcome all that bring
Praises, homage to our King.
Great God of love, thy chosen band
With rapture trace Thy loving hand.

We alone of all Thy wonders
Could endure Thy brilliant throne ;
Here for ever, nothing sunders
Our bright glories from Thine own.
To Thy pure light we raise our eyes,
Yet Love hath still some new surprise.

While this world's new birth we sung,
Love o'er her mantle flung ;
Then her face became so fair
Love herself might bosom there.
To this loved earth a sun was given,
Round whom she fondly rolls through heaven.

Bright wings sparkle in her air
Song's sweet voice is gushing there ;
And so joyous is the tone,
It mounts to heaven to join our own.
When shall we cease new themes to sing,
God of wonders, glorious King ?

What a glorious procession of marvels attends this work of creation, each succeeding step of Love surpassing other ! A brilliant carpet is spread over the earth, its green relieved by flowers of myriad hues ; trees and shrubs, laden with delicious fruits and blossoms, are flashing, brilliant with harmonious life ; bright finny multitudes possess the main, and enrich the streams and lakes with life and beauty ; but hitherto nothing moves the permanent habitant of those hills and plains. To supply this deficiency is God's next command, Love's next work :—

“Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind : and it was so.”—(*Gen.* i. 24, 25.)

Behold a cloud descends from heaven, black, deep in gloom—but Love's tremendous light is blazing within it. She is there in mighty power. The world must be complete. The lion and the lamb come forth together ; the elephant and the swift, antlered deer ;

the brilliant steed, the noble ox, the beauteous feline tribe ; the serpent, with bright wings and breast of flame—a beauteous biped ; with green and golden snakes, fangless and playful. All creatures, down to the smallest insect, are now produced. The beetle, the snail, the phosphorescent glowworm, every creeping thing has its birth before that cloud ascends. And God proclaims it good. The approving eye of unerring Wisdom views the work with pleasure and delight. The enraptured sun pours down warm floods of kisses. Love hath so grandly, so richly, so sweetly decked her, that earth is, indeed, a fair young thing to woo, as she moves along in all the pride of her stately beauty, with her charming bridesmaid, fitting attendant on her loveliness, receiving and transmitting the husband's smiles to brighten her repose. Expectancy in heaven is confident of some surpassing marvel. Such floods of love have been poured forth to embellish this renovated world, that she has become the fairest thing that floats through space, the richest palace of the fields of air—her still, her moving life, wonders, indeed, to behold ;—but *yet* she hath nothing *supreme*. All heaven believes, and feels with heavenly sympathy, it may not be that the highest gift within her shall

be sense. To govern such a mansion demands nobler powers than any she yet possesses. Some ray, some spark from the Divine intelligence, must perfect this great work. All eyes are watching the eternal glory. Never since angel was first created has the PRESENCE shone with such amazing splendour. The Omnipotent is about to declare some mighty work. Hark !—

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”—(*Gen.* i. 26.)

No order now to the obedient earth to summon all her powers for some new formation. No. Angels with rapture hear that God's own hand bestows her living King. In majesty the Eternal Word descends and animates the dust. The hand supreme moulds and fashions this beauteous form, this God-like creature ; the dust made animate, a living principle is there—the veins distend with vital blood ;—but before it has the power of impulse—before the now warm heart hath made even one pulsation—the breath of the Immortal is breathed into the nostrils, and the blood becomes commingled with the fire of God. A living soul inhabits now this lovely temple. An infusion of the immense eternity is dwelling in and united with the clay. Intelligence—a portion

of the Eternal Uncreate—a something that may ennoble his earthly nature, and make him like a God—is beaming in that proud eye, is stamped on that clear brow. To angel view, he seems to tread the dust from whence he came as though it had not mingled in his birth. He fixes his ardent gaze on the sun, as though his soul would pierce the secret of its brilliance and its glory, demanding whence its fire. His mien, his bearing, is full of noble dignity. The whole inferior creation come to pay him homage. Bird, and beast, and creeping thing, all seek his presence and acknowledge his sovereignty ; parading their beauties and their grace before him, courting his notice and his admiration, and placing themselves at his command. All earth belongs to him, but an especial *home* is at this same moment prepared for this sovereign of the world. God plants a garden * where every charm through which indulgent Love exhibits her bounty combines to throw beauty's richest mantle over it. Every fairest fruit and flower, all that is exquisite and good for food, is here ; and here man is brought to possess it. This is man's central home, his palace and his garden,

* Gen. ii. 8—14.

and here all living things are marshalled to greet him, and to receive some distinguishing appellation by his decisive word.* He names the animal creation. The first employment of that Divine intelligence which inhabits and beautifies his house of clay is to *define*, to interpret creation, to perpetuate with perspicuous phrase man's first conceptions in honour of his Maker. And fast as the creatures crowd, his verdicts run. No indecision arrests him. Like the orb of day, whose rays penetrate every, even the smallest crevice, he embraces all with his keen, piercing sight. And he loves them as he views them; for Love, who formed him and them, and who dwells in him, hath linked them all together in a holy bond of peace, and sympathy, and joy, filling them with her mighty enchantment, and with that delicious warmth which her glowing hands bestow.

God now declares man's sovereignty :—

“Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”—(*Gen.* i. 28.)

Behold the world complete! Complete? No.

* *Gen.* ii. 19, 20.

There is no beast, bird, or living creature that hath not some companionship—something resembling itself in form and attributes, with whom the general link of universal sympathy is incalculably strengthened—something that the thirsting eye regards with an especial fondness. The generating flame of Love demands a bride ; and all have received this matchless delight of earth save him alone, the appointed king, to whom they all pay homage, and confess inferiority. Is he alone to endure this incompleteness of enjoyment?—he in whom it must be, if bestowed, of so much more elevated a character—he on whom alone, the only one of all created things, as partaker of His image, and having received directly from Himself the breath of life—the voice of God bestowed a *name*? He is the full perfection of terrestrial sense, ennobled by Divine intellect ; enabled to hold converse with his Maker, and feeling within him the strong immortal leaven that dignifies his dust. His ample mind, already crowded by ten thousand fancies—already revelling in its powers of imagination—can find nothing possessed of similar endowments with himself—no counterpart of his external form, no being to whom he may communicate the knowledge of his spirit's

boundless joy, and of the deep, delicious tenderness of his heart. The immortal soul, thus combined with dust, holds sympathy with visible matter as with mind; the eternal spark within destroys no material yearning, but stimulates and impels to more exalted joys, imparting to the compound nature a capacity of bliss unknown to all beside. In vain his searching eye roves over the beautiful earth; in vain his vigorous gaze is fixed on heaven, and, mighty in his power of purity, would penetrate even to the eternal throne of God. There is a something not yet found—a felt, but indescribable want, that God only can supply: and Divine beneficence bestows what may satisfy it.

“It is not good for man to be alone.”—(*Gen.* ii. 18.)

Fiat of boundless Love in heavenly majesty!—

“I will make him a help meet for him.”—(*Idem.*)

Again the dust to be made animate? Again the breath of life to be breathed by the Almighty into the nostrils of a creature He has formed? No. A vast distinction is again to be made between the race of man and that of all inferior things—a difference full of eternal meaning. Man, and the companion of his life, the partner of his joys, are to be but of

one and the same flesh, partakers together of the immortal flame already bestowed. Sleep, that bounteous instrument of God, ordained to renovate the springs of sense, that might otherwise be impaired by the mightier power of the eternal principle within—sleep, by express Divine command, does not draw lightly her fairy fingers over the future object of her nocturnal care, but lays her hand with power upon him. What is now required and directed is a slumber, profound, yet lucid—deep as regards natural sense, yet clear as regards intellectual perception. In this state of organic apathy and nervous immobility, he beholds the Almighty hand extract materials from his open side.* The flaming fingers remove a warm, ensanguined bone. He is permitted to view the process of reproduction. He beholds that bone assume a form—his own—but oh, how much more soft and beautiful! It rises into substance; it is mantling, rich with life—a sweet, small, fairy thing, though in perfection cast, not larger than the bone. It is so small he might cradle it in his joined hands. But it has a mighty power—an influence to which his sleeping heart is not insensible. Memory will ever

* Gen. ii. 21.

treasure this moment, when he clings with delicious fondness to it, so diminutive, so faultless ; with little, tiny fingers, but that seem to lay hold of something in him with a giant's grasp. The flame of the Almighty hand plays around it ; it takes increase, it expands, with such perfectness of proportion, no one part outstepping other or destroying for a moment the harmony of its symmetrical agreement, that emotions new, unknown, indescribable, shoot electric through his frame as he beholds it assume a development approaching to his own. The bright and rosy feet grow not more quickly than those fairy hands, that precious bosom, those rounded limbs, that body's thrilling charms, that glittering, golden hair, that lovely face which glows with life's pure current. She stands before him, in his mighty sleeping consciousness, inundating him with her exquisite influence. Sleep withdraws her spell ; she removes her hand ; he wakes. The dream was true ! It presented no illusion. There she stands, endowed with that wondrous perfection of physical beauty which so gloriously completes creation. She is near ; but nearer still a hand unseen conducts her. With what sweet, enchanting grace she moves ! A witchery of mighty power is playing round her form

—is sparkling in her clear, lustrous eye, while music seems to rise from beneath her feet as at every step she comes nearer, nearer to his wild bounding heart. She flings an atmosphere of love around her, and through every tingling vein there is a play of joy which gushes from the full fountain of the heart's unused emotions. It is a tide of rapture—a pure and perfect bliss. Earth hath no treasure that can compare with her ; and she is his—his own—his bride—like him, soul and sense ; who, in all the confidence of her angelic purity, not knowing whence or what her joy, repays what she receives—a love-taught kiss, as folded fondly in his arms, pressed closely to his bounding heart, she clings to him with a full and perfect contentment, for which she has no words, though he is breathing love's precious music in her virgin ears :—

Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh thou art ;
My longing eyes desire ! Against this heart
Let thy fair bosom rest ; and be thy name
Isha, for out from Ish thy body came.

Now—now indeed is creation perfect. Now is the wondrous work accomplished ; and God is well pleased in beholding their delight. It is an increase of His own eternal joy—a new development of it

—for all pure existence is a portion of Himself; and these were fresh from His perfect hand. His voice—that loving voice which thrills the angelic world—is passing by them. Love’s sweetest tone is there. “Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth.* My blessing will ever rest on you while you continue to love me. All things that you see around you are good, and created for your use. The fruit of every tree is yours, with one only exception. *That* love forbids. To eat of it is to perish—for in the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die.† Obey, and you are wholly immortal. Almighty love hath made you her especial work, and you are the objects of her especial care; her bounty is visible around you. To you alone she hath imparted a living soul direct from her eternal source in heaven. The only perfect link between you and Me, is love. From that, a pure, unquestioning, uncorrupted obedience will ever spring. While you love Me, that obedience can never fail; but once cease to love Me, or let some other influence than mine prevail with you, and ye will obey Me no more. Then I shall become a terror to you—an object of fear and dread. Death

* Gen. i. 28.

† Gen. ii. 17.

and ruin will cling around you. This lovely nature, that must partake your curse, will curse you too. All things are from Me. Let your hearts seek Me in loving prayer and praise, and I am ever near you, a bountiful and a loving God."

They are alone in Eden! Love has remounted to her sapphire throne. The Eternal Word rejoins the glories of his Father's breast. He hallows one of earth's days, as an eternal commemoration of His repose. All heaven is full of harmony and joy.

Angels, spirits! heavenly throng,
Sweep your harps and pour your song;
Through the vast of endless space
Let not silence find a place.
Let it all its tribute pour—
Let it all our God adore.

CHORUS—Angels, spirits! heavenly throng,
Sweep your harps and pour your song.

Source of power, source of might,
Glory of these realms of light,
Father, King, Almighty Lord,
Spirit, Love, Eternal Word,—
We who view Thy brightest rays
Must renew our songs of praise.

CHORUS—Angels, spirits! heavenly throng,
Sweep your harps and pour your song.

Love is sovereign to command,
Beauty grows beneath her hand;
She to every sun hath sent
Rays to gem the firmament;

But so strong her latest spark,
All beside seem pale or dark.

CHORUS—Angels, spirits ! heavenly throng,
Sweep your harps and pour your song.

On that world whose charms outvie
All the marvels of the sky,
She a godlike King bestows ;
Dust with fire immortal glows ;
Earth with heaven's eternal mind
In one glorious form combined.

CHORUS—Angels, spirits ! heavenly throng,
Sweep your harps and pour your song.

CHAPTER III.

PARADISE.

RAPID as thought, to which no distance, however great, opposes the smallest obstacle or impediment—thought that mounts instantaneous to the farthest orb in space ;—but here let us pause. Does this untrammelled power of thought prove nothing? This marvel of man's being, has it no argument? Does it not rather furnish a most sublime proof, that ought to confound the fool who deems the immortal soul of man to be a mere attribute of clay—the fruit of some fine accidental portion of the visible material organism—the marvellous product of some solely terrestrial root alone?—who maintains that dust, allied with more subtle elements, holds, not an imparted, but an inherent mind ; or, that the mental flame, extraneous like that of a taper, burns clear and lustrous only while the union lasts, ending suddenly in dirty darkness, and in mephytic night? Such a being, in order that he may have an undisturbed enjoyment of the

pestilential reign of sin within him, welcomes dishonour, and estimates destruction as a gain. He scorns the glorious truth revealed by inspiration, which contains the Divine promise of immortal youth when the soul, freed from the chains and fetters of corruptible matter and incorporated with eternity, shall view and know, where thought is now lost in speculation, and where all hope of knowledge dies. With suicidal rage, he demands extinction as a bliss; and steels himself against any other conviction than that he is like the beasts that perish. Poor, wretched, abused immortal, clothed in mortal dust—if thou who readest art thus unhappy—hasten to cleanse thyself from the foul corrupting influence that deludes thee; unseal thine eyes, behold an eternal day inviting thee to endless joys. Spurn that sin, whose voice it is that cheats thee, and listen to that of thine own natural yearnings. Consider the unrivalled velocity of thy soaring and aspiring thoughts, and say, what elements could breed such a progeny—children that grasp illimitable space, and penetrate undismayed within the bosom of infinity. Recognize the glorious truth that thou art a spark of intelligent eternity, and claim thy wondrous birth-right.

Rapid as thought, Gabriel, one of the most glorious of the angelic host, traverses the bespangled fields of heaven, and alights radiant upon the blessed soil of Eden, a messenger from realms above. The bright archangel, fresh from the presence of the King of Kings, stands beside the lords of this sweet world of Love, with greetings from on high. Derived from the same source, and perfect as himself, they view his pure effulgence with delight ; while he regards with admiration and surprise the wondrous charms of that last and fairest product of Love's creative power.

“ Children of this new world, God who made all things, and who has thrown around you Love's most potent spell, has sent me to show you secrets of this beauteous home, and to instruct you in His will, whom all the hosts of heaven with delight obey. In His will resides the supreme power to bless ; eternal happiness is there ; and we, who live in the brightness of His presence, know well the joys His love can bestow. Strive ever to bask in its sweet light, and your bliss will prove exhaustless as the source from which it proceeds.”

They listen enchanted to the music of heaven in his rapturous voice, their eyes continually seeking

each other, but every thought confirming the words of their angelic guide. They feel and know that in their hearts there is a rich fountain of joy, and his invitation to delight finds an echo in their bosoms. Their life so new, their bliss is growing like the prophet's gourd ; emotions too deep for words finding in soft caresses a language eloquent of love.

The archangel points to the horizon where the sun seems now to be almost touching the fair breast of earth. " Behold, that orb which supplies your light will soon be lost to view, and a dark veil will conceal this beauty. Every day will thus end ; but that smaller orb which reflects his rays will sometimes give her light. Night will constantly succeed to day, and day will as surely return to fulfil his mission. The sun that now sinks in western skies will reappear in yon far east, and beautify it with his rising glory. All this is a beneficence of Love, and will prove a source of precious blessings. As the fading day throws his lengthened shadows, all nature, as well as you, will seek repose, and give itself up to the refreshing sway of sleep. See, even this fair flower is closing its chalice till the returning sun shall again expand its beauties in its Maker's praise. The beasts are

crouching, the bird hath ceased his song, and hides his head beneath his painted wing. A deepening silence is growing round you, and the soft infection will soon creep over your own spirits. Lift up your hearts in gratitude to God for all these blessings, and see, His careful hand hath prepared for you beneath these clustering flowers a mossy bed where your limbs extended, her head's fair beauties pillowed on your breast, you may enjoy repose. With returning day again I come." He spreads his flashing wings ! vainly they strive to view his brilliant path, and sleep soon folds them in her blest embrace.

* * * * *

Source of life and joy supreme,
Angels' never-ending theme,
To Thee we raise,
With her day's first golden beam,
Earth's song of praise.

Children, creatures of His care,
Wake ! oh, wake ! for life prepare,
Day is springing ;
Wings begin to cleave the air,
Music bringing.

All creation's work is done,
Love is resting on the throne,
The day is blest :
Every seventh day be known
A day of rest.

Love six days the toil endured,
Thus this beauty was procured,
Come and praise Him ;
Be His holy name adored,
Bow before Him.

Ever when in glowing east
Mounts the light for nature's feast,
His glory sing ;
Joy renewed in man and beast
Should tribute bring.

Angelic harps and tongues proclaim for man the homage due to heaven. Their senses all entranced, the awakened pair quaff this delicious music and lift their hearts to God. "Teach us Thy will ; may we ever show ourselves worthy of Thy love ; and may our souls, that came from Thee, shine for ever in Thy glory."

When that seraphic music roused them new wonders burst on their astonished gaze. A floral arch of luscious fragrance overhung the entrance to the cave where their nuptial couch was spread. This bower and cave are on the side of a fair hill facing the east, and when the laughing, glowing morn placed his golden feet upon the distant sky, he poured into this cave a rich refulgent tide, beneath whose touch beauty crowded into being ; for his rays fell upon imprisoned gems, every

precious stone being there ; and all strove to tinge his light with their delicious hue, as they flashed it back from their brilliant face. How their young hearts sprung with joy, as this rich bounty burst on the ravished sight of the new-made lords of earth, their ears drinking in the while that celestial harmony. The tender pressure, the lips' lingering kiss, can alone express their pure souls' great delight ; then springing from their couch, they strive to imitate the seraphs' magic notes, and their blending voices mount in grateful tribute from beneath those clustering flowers to their Maker and their God.

The sun's warm vigorous rays embrace them. Love and joy beam in their face. All nature responds to the voice of day. A soft, tremulous music whispers among the trees, where the air plays with their flowers and blossoms, and floats along, scattering the fragrance they bestow. The young lords of earth feast with rapture on the rising sun. The fire immortal mingled with their blood, holds sympathy with his glory ; they feel that he is kindred—that the living flame in both came from the same bright source ; and as they bask in his vivifying light they know that the

animating power of Love is there. The lark soars aspiring above their heads, pouring forth his blithe carol, the rich melody gushing from his breast in one continuous and unbroken strain, holding their ears captive, and constraining their eyes to follow his progress in the golden heaven. Feathered beauties disport on every spray; the peacock spreads his gorgeous fan at their feet, and parades for them all his charms; while in every bush and tree, some little throats are welling with their sweet melodies.

A gentle stream is flowing past the foot of their hillock. It is made glorious now by the splendour thrown upon it, and is dancing in its beauty. Its gilded charms entice them, and they descend. But Love has scattered such profusion around, that they are arrested by some new delight at every step. They cannot move or turn but she is there, abounding and profuse. Only an Omnipotent hand could be thus lavish. In some dear flower, whose form and hues alone would have won for it admiration and delight, she still found room to place a delicious fragrance, and to add a bloom that softens and enchants. Their little hill is so rich in these obstructions that their progress toward the stream is

very slow. The sense of possession increases their joy. All these things are *theirs*. God hath said it. Their hearts are full of love and gratitude that such rich invention was found *for them*. Oh, what a morn of happiness ! Existence, breathing life itself, is bliss in such an atmosphere of love ; and earth hath no sensations now but of love and joy.

They reach the river ; and Eve's lovely eyes flash her gladness, like the stream of some bright planet. She sees, disporting in the golden water, two noble birds, whose ample plumage is of dazzling whiteness. Now they are swimming proudly near, side by side, on that bright, burnished surface. Their arched necks enchant her. The pleasing swell of their thick downy bosoms stirs her heart, when their necks entwine, and the snowy beauties press breast to breast. Oh, 'tis eloquent of love ! They dive, they rise, they scatter the sparkling water from their plumage, they beat its gilded face with their powerful wings, and drive the growing circles from them, to spread in eager chase, and meet and kiss upon the flowery verge, making the myosotis tremble with their joys.

They cannot longer passive gaze ; they plunge into the stream, and give new impulse to the

amorous strife. The birds obey their Queen's commands, and bring their plummy softness to receive the caresses of her pleased hands. They experience the invigorating power of the flood. Every vein seems to swell with new life as they emerge, and seek among the laden trees, so rich in treasures, the food created for their use. Seated on the bank, they feed their snowy favourites ; while finny beauties, red as evening skies, crowd the surface that they may share in that ample feast.

But how can fallen man paint a picture of that loving Paradise ? And that first morning, when every pleasure was springing newly born to life ; when every moment's wing bore fresh delights to varying sense, imparting its potent influence to their minds, and thrilling their hearts with fervent gratitude to that exuberant Love, who had drawn together so many tributary streams, to swell the already ample tide of their blissful innate joy. That he should essay to do it, proves the yearning of his nature for that forfeit bliss. Oh, blessed day !—for ever, ever dear—the first entire day of human life—so abounding in felicity—*God's day of rest !* May the beneficent return of this blessed day, ever feed the holy fire in human hearts, that the spiritual

nature of man may aspire to the heaven of heavens, and win new blessings from all-bounteous Love.

The sun is scarcely one short hour high in eastern heavens, and yet, what vast variety of happiness hath had its birth in this sweet home of man ! There is a fount of joy in everything, but there are oceans of it in the heart of man, for whom everything was made. And over the whole world's circumference, there is not a spot without some new concealed bliss for him—some slumbering happiness hereafter to be revealed. For Love declared this when God commanded him to multiply, and to subdue the earth ;* in other words, “Let your bright race spread over its surface, and enjoy the pleasures in its ample store.”

Not one minute now flies past on its rapid, lustrous wing, without dropping a pure pearl into their nectar cup of innocence. The rich draughts of sense are indeed precious. United with a pure, immortal, bright, unsullied mind, they are the gold and sparkling gems of life ; and in nothing did Love more strikingly demonstrate how ineffable she is, than in thus enriching earthly matter with celestial intelligence.

* Genesis i. 28.

Unseen in his approach, the bright angel is again at their side, while they are still gazing on those sweet waters gliding past, with some ever new delight. With him they now rove through Eden. His companionship brings new bliss as he teaches them mysteries of earth and heaven. Aided by him, their spirits penetrate the azure skies, and view Divine beneficence enthroned in all the sublimity of its glory, and all the softness of its love. In their now pure state, sense does not cloud their intellect. Their bodies are indeed chained to earth, but their souls are so free and untrammelled, so keen with heavenly perception, that no angel could tell what they might fail to comprehend. Oh, blessed, blessed existence ! The silver-winged soul, a peerless dove, is brilliant with celestial brightness ; Love has combined so much of heaven with the dust of earth. Their bright visitant unfolds to them all the mysteries of creation ; shows them this world sprang redeemed from chaos, void, and darkness, and how the hosts of heaven watched and triumphed as Love's hand was shown in the advancing work. Creation lies clear before their eager spirits. They hear the order of their own existence : they seem to feel the breath of flame as it is breathed into man's nostrils. Eve had

already heard amazed how and whence she took her beauteous being. All is known. They walk with God in His majestic paths ; they comprehend ; they love. Now he reveals how, when Love had finished her mighty work, and reposed in the Eternal breast, God hallowed the earthly day marked by every seventh ascending sun, as a day of unbroken earthly rest—a day on which especially man may soar from earthly delights into heaven's high mysteries, and contemplate though distant ages, his clay's conjunction with his immortal soul. "On other days, you will dress and keep this garden—controlling and governing the rich exuberance of spontaneous nature, encircling the bending branches with beautiful flowers, constructing retreats for pleasure and repose. You will find nature obedient, and ever ready to receive her impulse at your hands. The tree will grow wherever you desire, the herb will spring, the chosen flower will come at your behest. Plant your sprig or your seed ; it will swell with life, will spread its roots around, and soon gratify your wish. There is no induration in the bosom of this beauteous earth ; confide the germ to her, and her powers will perform the rest."

They take their way around the hillock of their

lovely bed, and discover the gushing source of that stream which has so contributed to their delight. The water is leaping joyously from shelf to shelf, and throwing laughingly around its clouds of spray, in ceaseless mist which the sun beautifies with golden glory and prismatic hues. Here spreads the giant hydrangia, with its thousand masses, and the rich magnolia blends its fragrance with that of the deep-dyed rose. Cerulean beds of myosotis deck the borders of the stream, while round the basin of the fall, huge camellias display their tens of thousands of flowers, or pearly white or glowing red ; and the *Victoria Regia* floats on the crystal waters in unequalled pride. Here the creeping strawberry, with its tempting, fragrant, luscious fruit, abounds, fearing no comparison with the golden pine. Calmias and azaleas vie in beauty ; the yellow jasmin twines around the trees ; geranium adds its fragrance to the air ; a thousand scents, ten thousand hues, combine, clustering and spreading, creeping and climbing round.

Behold the tree of knowledge. Adam tells of God's injunction, that to touch, or to eat of its fruit, brings with it death—some mysterious evil, not the less dread that its nature is unknown. This, he

adds, is the test of Love, on which alone depends eternal youth. And now the angel expatiates on this command: "This decree of heaven's Almighty King must, as coming from Him, be good and wise. It was for His pleasure this fair world was formed; for His pleasure that with such marvellous power He united with your dust an emanation from His own eternal mind, demanding from you, as the sole return for all the bounties He has lavished, that you should love Him. It is not enough that you should say, We love. Here is a test that will demonstrate the truth. This is not needed for His knowledge, because, whether in man or spirit, nothing can be concealed from His all-piercing eye. But God will ever have his judgments clear and unimpeachable, and full of light to all. Therefore this tree. There is nothing in its fruit, save as it proves the mind, the soul, the thought. It has not one single charm surpassing those of other trees that so abound in this garden. It has nothing more calculated to please the sense. There is no greater beauty or sweetness in it. While your love is pure and unsullied, it can have no charms for you—it will remain perfectly innocuous. Danger can never come from it until love fails, and then it will reveal the

loss of that love which He requires of you, not to Him alone, but to you, and to every inhabitant of the celestial world. He made you for His pleasure ; that entails obedience to His will ; but if love depart, and you requite His love with disobedience, He can no longer have any pleasure in you. There is no dangerous mischief either in the tree or its fruit. Love God, as God loves you, and it has no power to harm ; for love must have paled its light within your hearts—you must have admitted something into competition with it, must have made something superior to it—before your eyes can ever find one single tempting charm in that poor charmless tree. Now that you love Him, it wakes no desire in your breasts. Guard well that pure and holy flame within you, trusting, undoubting, seeking your bliss in His love—His love, in which consists the eternal happiness of all the hosts of heaven.” He ceases, and celestial voices confirm his words, the Eternal bending to His children of the earth to confirm them in His love :—

Love—Love—Love !
What the bliss of spirits pure
Who through endless time endure
Love—Love—Love !

Love—Love—Love !
 What makes angel harps so strong ?
 What wakes every seraph's song ?
 Love—Love—Love !

Love—Love—Love !
 What is knowledge ? what is truth ?
 What is everlasting youth ?
 Love—Love—Love !

Love—Love—Love !
 What alone can never die ?
 What fills all eternity ?
 Love—Love—Love !

There is a deep and holy charm upon their spirits,
 as "Love—Love—Love" dies away in the far distance of heaven—fainter, more faint, until it is heard no more. The angel, too, has gone, unheeded ; and again they remain alone.

How full of scenes of beauty is this place that Love hath given them ! Day by day its charms increase upon them. They trace the whole course of the river from its lovely source, as it bends, and curls, and winds, bringing every spot in this delicious garden near to its fertilizing stream. Oh, precious, and ever, ever dear to human thought those days of man's purity and innocence, when he was encompassed by God's unlimited bounty !—when he walked with angels, and was visited by God, whose voice

passed among the trees of the garden, thus bringing down heaven to earth, and ennobling him by such communion ; when he was often roused from slumber by a seraph hymn, and was only stirred by fancy to physical exertion—all creation doing him homage—without a care, because incertitude did not yet belong to earth, and pain and fear were not only unborn, but unimagined ; when he was in one unbroken harmony of accord with the dear companion being, united in a perfect sympathy of mind and body, heart, deed, word—life's delicious tie binding them together, loving, loved, and pure ; when change seemed impossible, and endless joy their assured portion !

But, alas ! there was one mighty and subtle being, to whom the bliss of Eden, this blessed harmony, this promise of unending joy, in none of which he could participate, worked a loathing hatred that its entire ruin and destruction alone could satisfy. Condemned for some crime that nothing may atone, an unfathomable mystery conceals his nature and his powers. We only know, by the disgusting and debasing sway of sin over polluted, fallen, and plundered man, that when the latter, yielding to his temptation, fell from heavenly

love, he became the prey of a monster from whose fatal grasp only Eternal Mercy coming to his rescue could ever set him free.

As I approach the verge of that abyss into whose dread and loathsome depths man plunged his present and his eternal joy, what fearful clouds of painful darkness enfold in awful gloom my troubled soul! I behold myriads of monsters springing eagerly from that foul pit whose horrid brilliance sears my shrinking eyes. It reeks with a filthy, noisome, stifling steam, through which forked lightnings flash, while a dread thunder reverberating peals through the frightful depths. Yet must I pierce the seething slime of those infernal pools, to trace the brood of Sin, defiling the stream of time.

How fast those horrors throng! The spectres rise from the very gates of Eden, in one unbroken line on his polluted stream, where Sin, the giant, floats triumphant on its tide. Behold not far from Eden a human being bathe his hands in human blood's deep, ineradicable dye! Death's first victory over the fallen race. Another! Advancing thousands bear those dreadful stains! Disease in varying shapes appears; and Death is mowing down

the fresh, the green, the sere, with fell, relentless hand, amid the cries and groans of suffering humanity. . . . Millions on millions in one mass! a drowning world utters its wild shrieks of agony, that demon floating on with ghastly mirth as all creation plunges screaming in. . . . Not all. Love has yet some preserved. A little while, and her flame conceals the stream from view; an ark alone is floating over a world's watery grave. Love's flame is gone! But again the soul is hurried on amid sights and sounds of mortal suffering. Sin riots in destruction. Behold him tearing the newborn infants from their mothers' breasts, bloody victims to some of his foul and loathsome spawn of spurious gods; gaunt famine, pestilence, the field of battle—all give him plenteous harvests. Fair cities on a rich and beautiful plain, polluted, perish in avenging fire. A flaming sword is passing through a thickly-peopled land. Myriads, o'erwhelmed, are battling beneath the suffocating waters. Contending hosts now count their millions. Sin has universal sway. His vile demon host, making man the vehicle of their atrocities, transform the earth into one foul, enormous sty, where rapine and murder revel in blood without control. . . .

The flame of Divine Love is almost lost to view :
when lo !—A CRY UNPARALLELED CONVULSES NATURE !
. . . Sin grows pale as that flame is playing brilliant round a bloody cross. He is mighty still ; but he has received a wound, through which his strength must day by day diminish ; for all who believing gaze upon that cross, mount on beauteous wings, resplendent, to eternal skies ! . . . The tide rolls on ; Sin, bloated, is still revelling there, but shows his mortal wound. Death kills, but totters. And, lo ! in a moment, there is no more stream of time. An awful glory spreads from shore to shore, and drinks it up with fierce consuming fire. That bloated Sin, that fearful Death are gone for ever ; while countless millions of man's redeemed race, are peopling the eternal realms of glory ; the kingdom of heaven prepared for ransomed man !

CHAPTER IV.

TEMPTATION AND FALL.

THE sky of Paradise is bright and clear as on the day of man's creation. No cloud has ever yet imparted to it the most transient stain ; or, intervening, robbed that precious garden of one single ray of light. The air is pure as ever, for corruption is yet unborn, and man breathes a strengthening, life-giving atmosphere, that maintains in him the power of perpetual joy. But though no sign proclaims its presence, there is evil lurking near. Man is busily engaged in those employments and duties that Love designed. Eve rarely wanders from her husband's side—never, except in search of fruits for their repast—and gives him ever sweet and toying aid, and words, and kisses. But whenever she goes in quest of food, she has a constant and most assiduous attendant. The Serpent, that brilliant biped, is immediately at hand. He seems to divine her thoughts ; for if the fruit she seeks hang on some

lofty bough—and it is ever the fairest that wins the eye of fond affection—he mounts and plucks it ; and, descending, places it in her fair hands. His intelligence is evidently of an order far superior to that of other beasts around, and he holds but small communion with them ; for he herds not with them, but follows in the footsteps of earth's Queen ; or, when she is with Adam, reposes whence he can observe her movements, and speedily rejoin her. Gradually he hath become an object of curiosity and wonder to fair Eve. Some new quality—something not observed before—seems continually unfolding in him. His form and bearing were always proud, but at last he really attains to dignity. At first he was mute as any other of the animal creation ; but now he has a sort of speech, which, though unintelligible, evinces a capacity of thought, a desire to communicate, and thus stimulates more and more her wonder. In no other creature hath she been sensible of any change. They are all what they seemed to be when first she saw them, immediately after her own creation. They are always gentle and affectionate ; they seek her, and court her notice ; but, satisfied with a regard, they then leave her and resume their song or their sport. The power of love

within them is continually visible ; they are evidently under its precious influence ; but *he*—beneath his scales of burnished green and gold she hath never yet been able to discover any trace of love, except in that constant attendance on her, that watchful eagerness to serve and please her. By slow and almost imperceptible degrees he has thus grown into Eve's daily and hourly thoughts. Her sweet eyes are now continually searching for some new change in him. He is an object of interest. He has established himself in her pure and innocent mind as a creature devoted to her, and has thus become familiar to it

How rapidly the forty days have passed since those sweet glories shone around the bridal bed, and their slumber was first broken by the harmony of the seraph host. Angels will long recall this blessed time of Love's triumphant reign ; for never will so sweet a harmony again be known beneath their highest heaven. Seek not yet thy bed of gold, thou bright and glorious sun ; conceal not yet thy majestic face with those roseate curtains of the misty horizon ; for in thus withdrawing thou wilt leave for the last time a scene of innocence and peace. Before another day shall have passed, this beauteous

race will have elevated Sin to earthly dignity, enthroned him in place of Love, and banished peace and joy for ever. Linger then yet awhile ; thy lovely bride is all unspotted now ; she hath never yet been soiled by the smallest pollution ; she can still smile over all her surface in conscious purity, as thy warm kisses greet her. What ! thou wilt not tarry ? It shall be ere long demanded of thee, and thou wilt obey ; but to light a plain that slaughter dyes deep with human blood !*

The place where Adam now employs his time, is not far distant from that forbidden tree which hath never yet moved even the most faint or fugitive desire, in either human breast. Supremely happy in the love of God, in each other's love, and in the exhaustless bounty around them, that tree has been to them as if it had no place in their bright garden. Perfect from the hand of their Maker, it would seem difficult that they should in themselves engender disobedience ; and, but for the existence of that mysterious and mighty Spirit of Evil, the human race had never fallen from its state of blessedness. The sun mounts high in heaven. Fair Eve bounds

* Joshua x. 12, 13, 14.

forth in quest of food. Well may our charmed eyes follow her every step on this eventful, fatal day, for never again can this world behold a grace so perfect, so enchanting. It is the dower of innocence and purity, and these are on the very verge of destruction. She stops, and casts inquiring glances round her. The Serpent! where is he? He is not at her side, as has been his wont. How is this? But she has observed of late that in leaving her he ever takes the same path, and, as she misses him—his aid having now become a constant need—*she seeks him*. She has not far to search; for there he stands, beneath that tree of fatal gifts, his brilliant form expanding, stretching with eagerness, his body all in motion with gestures wild and vehement, unknown till now in Eden. Behold some new surprise! another stage in this creature's strange development! Awhile she stands, and views his continual rapid changes of position, his violent demonstrations. Wondering, she draws near to learn what he has discovered thus to interest and engross him, so as to make him insensible to her presence. Seemingly absorbed, however, in his delighted contemplation of *that tree*, he feigns not to perceive the approach of his hoped-for victim. But what is this? Ah! now

she is excited too. Words! speech like hers and Adam's! like the angels! and this not broken and incomplete! no faltering, imperfect accents! no half-formed sounds! but sweet, fervid, passionate—such as her ear has never heard till now; for hers has hitherto drank only the soft, witching tones of truth, sincerity, and love, so strangely different from the florid exaggeration of heartless falsehood, feigned emotion, and perfidious guile. “Oh, blessed—blessed tree! *tree*, how unlike all others! *tree*, O how more precious than all else this world contains! O fruit, *fruit* divinely sweet—the wondrous food of God and angels—that makes them what they are; *fruit*, that makes me now immortal, since I thus have found the glorious secret of their might and power. How the light of some strange world of glory floods through all my soul! To have once been *such a thing*—and now, so brilliant as I am, to stand—to walk erect—to think, O wondrous power—to speak, aye, speak as angels speak—and dare to send these bold aspiring thoughts beyond those flaming worlds of sky—among the mighty hosts of heaven, who wait attendant to swell *His* pageant, and make up *His* state! What next—*what next*, thou blessed, blessed fruit? As thou hast made me what I am, thou

canst make me something more. And she ! what may not *she* become, that lovely Queen of this fair world, who now surpasses all things ? I will seek her. She must know this grand, this mighty secret. I will *tell her*—oh, I burn with rapture—to speak, to speak ! Oh, she shall learn the thoughts that make this transformed bosom glow ; she shall hear how swells my heart at the faintest sound of her lightest step. Ah ! there—behold her ! Queen, lovely Queen of earth ! ”

Eve regards him, mute with amazement. Here is indeed something she cannot comprehend—she, who never found a difficulty in what that angel told her, even when he discoursed of God and heaven—eternity and creation. The Tempter beholds her under the influence of his spell, and deems his moment of victory arrived. He ascends that tree which Eve had thought that even to touch was death ; he plucks the fairest fruits his eye can find, descends unhurt, and presents before her that forbidden thing, offering it to—almost placing it in—her hands. But he has erred. Fair Eve repels him. Yet there he waits, regarding alternately that fruit and her, while her deep blue, searching eyes dilating gaze with extremest wonder, as she tells

him it is God's command that they shall not eat of this tree. He feigns surprise and disbelief. The voice of irony is for the first time heard with that of falsehood in Eden. "Not eat? not eat the fruit of this blessed tree?—fruit that as much surpasses all other, as your exquisite beauty does that of the meanest creature near you? It cannot be! What? hath God said ye shall *not* eat of every tree of the garden?"* Methought this place was *yours*—that He had bestowed it on *you*—that all here was *yours*! Why should it not be? He cannot want it—*He*! Has He not all heaven to Himself? What can He want with this?" No, He hath not denied the trees of the garden; we may eat of their fruit, they *are* our own; but of this tree, *only of this*, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.†

"O thou fairest, loveliest thing of earth; the brightness of whose sweet beauty far surpasses that of angels! the only queen of this new world—to whom all things in it of right belong—how shall I dare deny what you tell me God has chosen to say, for some purpose, He knows what—*yet*—I have eaten

* Genesis iii. 1.

† Genesis iii. 2, 3.

—yet—I do not die. I touch ! behold ! it harms me not ! Die ? Well, I will eat again. You see ! . . . O fruit most sweet—so sweet that were it really death, I still, oh, still would eat ! Were all this garden *mine*, did I alone possess it, freely, oh, freely, would I give it all, only that I might continue to feed on thee ! But what is death ? This that thou hast given me ? this marvellous change thou hast wrought in me ? can this be death ? Then death is might and glory, here below ! Embrace me ever then, thou dear, thou charming death : let me feel more and more of thy precious perfume in me, since thou hast killed in me that vile, ignoble, wretched, loathsome worm—that despicable form—to make me—what now I am—the chief in beauty on the earth, except my matchless sovereigns. You err—O fairest Queen of earth—you err—it cannot be ! If I but touch it, I feel new might and vigour in me. Demand of that angel who so often comes to visit you. He well knows its power—no one better than he.” No, no ; I do not err in what I said. Adam asked—and the angel confirmed it all. But you—I cannot understand this wonder—where—how got you that speech ? “ *Here*—where methinks I soon shall gain all heaven ! *here*—where I long have

eaten—where I daily eat—and as I eat, still grow in beauty, knowledge, power—and still obtain some new, some precious gift. Yes—I will tell—you have a right to know, for all here is yours ; and are you not my sovereigns ? I know none other ; I acknowledge none other ! Your God, I never see ; and all on earth I rank above, except yourselves, oh, far, far above, since I have found this blessed tree—this life of Paradise—this heaven of earth, and learned its glorious secret ! Yes, sweet lovely Queen—long, long ere you and Adam were, all around you had existence, I among the rest. But I was not at first what now you see me. I was nothing but a mere vile snake ; one of those legless, wingless, curling, crawling things, the meanest of the mean—in all creation, which I now most loathe. Oh, memory brings it back with horror, and with shame ! It was this precious fruit gave me memory ; before I ever ate, I nothing knew—and since I have begun to eat, I nothing can forget. But enough ; I found this tree. I twisted up among its fruit—and ate ! Its first effect—what it first bestowed, was a burning wish for more. Thus first I knew that delicious thing, *desire*. I returned—again I ate—again—oh, sense of joy—*joy* came—I felt as if through all my

veins, I burned with some delicious fire ! From that moment I lived to eat—and eating ever, grew—knowing of daily change, and new sensations that made life a constant feast of bliss—to be what now I am ! Then came your marvellous beauty, and threw its delicious light over Eden. That day will live for ever *here*—here in this heart that worships you. Since then I have craved for nothing, I have nothing known, but to attend my queen, and then return to this most blessed fruit of heavenly might, and seek what eating yet would give—if it would give me power to speak. Only three short days have passed, since my tongue first began to form some stammering sounds—and now — (thou fruit of fruits!)—I SPEAK ! Oh, you can never tell—you to whom speech came with life—what bliss this gift of utterance doth bestow, through which the pent-up thoughts that almost burst the heart, may find relief in words ! Oh, life with speech becomes a new existence ; it is tenfold the life that knows not how to tell the ear, it lives. And that imprisoned thought—though first to think ennobles, becomes a dreadful pain. *But now, I speak !* This tree abounds, it swells, it bursts, with every sweetest joy. Through it I knew good from evil—

for evil things there are, though yet you do not know them. *I* had not known but for this blessed fruit—but, now I view all things *within*—can choose the good—all that gives life, and strength, and glory, joy, and fond delights—and, leaving evil, thus escape all harm! Will not this make me immortal? Oh, God himself can now set no bounds to *my* joy. Not eat! All came from this blessed tree! Knowledge is power—and power—oh, that must be the chief celestial bliss; if not, where is the secret of the eternal happiness of God? In what else can it consist? . . . It is a wondrous fruit! It is not in me alone it works. That bird, to whose song I have watched you often listen, who makes this lower heaven ring as up he mounts, pouring it forth so sweet, so incessant, and so strong, was but a poor common thing with only one faint chirping note. I saw him come and eat; he bounded from spray to spray, from fruit to fruit—that faint note grew in volume—still he ate. Anon, his throat with music swelled—it gushed—he soared—and melody's full flood, delicious, rapturous, ceaseless poured. He could not rest below. This fruit leads up to heaven; he must, *must* rise. And I, in thought, when I have feasted here, command all the powers above! . . .

You do not doubt—that bird—hark to his flood of song—and that from one poor, wretched, twittering note! But I have more to tell; you tried—how often have I seen you strain your lovely eyes, when he had disappeared as you had turned to view some other object—you tried—to trace that bright angel through the sky; you thought he went above. He did not mount; you start—but it is true—for *here* he *always* came—he *always* comes. Oh, I have watched the very fruit he chooses—this—this I hold is that which he would take—he eats; soon his light pours like a flood around him—*then*, up he darts—he *cannot* rise till then! Oh, is it not a fruit? And often when I saw him I have thought—O you—my beautiful—my queen—could I but tell to you this precious secret, what should hinder you to soar as well as him? Eating *here*, might not bright silver wings soon adorn you—soon add to your sweet body's grace—and give you power to pierce those azure skies, and see and know yourself what heaven contains? For if it thus ennobles meaner things—the wretch I was—that bird—what may it not bestow on them in whom God's spirit lives—who want so little more to be like Him? . . . And you, too, are immortal! . . . Die you cannot* . . .

* Gen. iii. 4.

you bear the eternal flame . . . you ne'er can die . . . is it not beautiful? This would have been that angel's choice when next he came, had I not plucked for you . . . oh, it will vie with all the garden holds! . . . how fair—how delicate—and such delicious fragrance! . . . there—there—you touch . . . behold, you die not! Die? That light of heaven within, no power of God can quench . . . it is His own—it cannot be destroyed—it lives eternal in Divinity . . . and when He gave it you, He made your life as long as is His own—for what He gave had been in Him from all eternity! . . . Ah, well He knew ye should *not* surely die . . . because . . . *He knew ye cannot!* Why should He thus deceive? Oh, He is wise . . . He knew if *once* ye ate, your strengthened sight should view all He doth view* . . . Is it not true—for you have tried of every fruit bût this—there is none other left to try—is it not true, none hath such perfume? . . . And 'tis luscious, too, beyond all other. . . . Eating, ye must surpass angels in power and beauty . . . and why? since here the power resides—why, should ye not be as gods, as *well* He knows ye *must* become in eating.

* Gen. iii. 5.

. . . Ah, behold—you yet have scarcely tasted*—yet it throws a lustre in your eyes that makes yonder sun seem pale as her of night. The strong enchantment works. Oh, ye must be as gods! Haste then to Adam—let the Godlike power I now behold at work, exalt you both at once; or, you may rise, and leave him mean for ever. To-night I bring you more. Since now I speak, command me.

* * * * *

. . . . *They are mine!*" Yes, they are his. The subtle Tempter has triumphed over Love. Oh, he marshalled against it, mighty powers of evil—envy, vanity, ambition, lust, doubt of God. Even the Godlike desire of infinite bliss he turned to deadly poison. What he said is true; there is a change upon her. From those resplendant eyes in which the angel ever gazed with wonder at the depth of their soft, pure, delicious light, strange fire is now flashing; and that sweet cheek, heretofore so transparently delicate in substance and in hue, is now of flaming, burning red. Her words have lost their soft, low melody; they come pouring and gushing forth, a torrent, as she tells the lying wonders of that fatal tree, by which the Tempter has

* Gen. iii. 6.

cheated her to her destruction. All is said ! And Adam—what words could describe his change from confidence and trust in God, through sorrow, doubt, and fear, lest he should lose *her* who stirs his heart-strings with her lightest breath ! No ; he is not so overpowered with delusion as his Eve ; but the irresistible fascination of the loving woman to his loving heart, then, as ever since it has been, drew the man into the same fault by which she fell. God became second in his heart. The subtle Tempter, who would have failed in any direct attack upon his more powerful reason, assailed the tenderness of his soul and the energy of his senses through the mighty influence of her love ; and he *strove* to believe her rather than God, as an excuse for doing what she desired, and what God forbade. Do you not hear him say, “ Why didst thou eat, my Eve ? what can there be of bliss we have not known ; what could we desire more ? But, my life’s best life, whatever may be your fate, that fate be mine ; for, good or evil, we will never part.”

He eats ; and Earth, through all her burning depths—round her vast bulk—from pole to pole, represents the wound of Love ! The tranquil peace and joy of life depart at once. The fire that flashed in

Eve's changed eyes, and burned her cheek, is seen in Adam too. It scorches every vein ; it changes all the substance of the brain ; the delirious, feverish restlessness of *sin*, replaces the soft, brilliant, calm of love. "That was what the Serpent said," cries Eve, "he said it burned. Oh, we shall be as gods ! Come, Adam, to our bower ! I cannot bear this sun !"

Yes, the enchantment works ; but, alas, poor erring ones, not toward Godlike power, but toward exhaustion, shame, and fear ; toward pain and death. In that fire which burns their veins, mortality has begun his work, and first thrusts his fingers among the fibres of their frames. The brand of sin is on their brow ; they are polluted ; they have opened wide the doors of endless night—and all the hosts of evil are free to rove at will over the surface of this beautiful world. Short—short is their delusion. The delirium that seized them has soon passed away. Their eyes are unveiled ; truth rushes fast upon their souls ; the charm *has* worked ; they know good and evil, for they deplore their perished innocence, and feel a strong presentiment of coming woe. Their blood freezes with terror ; new things in God's garden. And not less new is their shame. Poor Eve, convulsed, hides her burning face with

her trembling hands, and rolling down her cheeks are hot and bitter tears—earth's first large drops of sorrow—the prelude to impending copious floods of human woe. Eve first sinned, and first sorrows; her heart is in agony, her eyes are streaming Oh, hers are rending sighs, and deep, repentant tears—and these are blessed. They cry for pardon; they are eloquent with Love; and who can tell how much this penitential grief mitigated the just anger of an insulted God?

They know that they are naked;* most strange knowledge thus to follow immediately on their fall. Can it be that (with their perceptions so much more acute than ours now are) they became immediately sensible of the presence of evil spirits round them, and shrunk from their polluting touch and gaze? It cannot be doubted that they crowded about these lovely creatures, on which they were for the first time allowed to look, and rejoiced that these, and such as these, were henceforth to become the vehicles of their abominable propensities. Love, too, in that first moment of their sin, when the fall was complete in Adam's transgression, had with-

* Genesis iii. 7.

drawn a portion of her fire from all the surface of this world, from earth, air, water, man, beast, bird, and tree—even from the deepest ocean, because there was too much of hers to dwell with sin. This, no doubt, changed their bodily sensations.

They know that they are naked. They feel the want of the sun's warmth ; but they shun his light, in which, until now, they had ever rejoiced. They are sensible that good has fled, and that evil reigns below. What language could describe the mental tortures of this fragment of a day ! The strange power that the soul possesses for overwhelming with unknown woes, is now first felt on earth. Their guilty spirits shrink from the fatal consequences of their act ; and yet they cannot cease for a single moment to speculate about them. Shame, repentance, and remorse cling to them ; and they throw their startled glances round on scenes now hallowed by their departed bliss. Was it for *this* they outraged God ? for *this* that they rebelled against Him ? And what is death ? Eve feels the Tempter's lie—it is not might and glory—but what is it ? this strange, mysterious, awful penalty, “dying, ye shall die.” Poor fallen ones ! amid their doubts' augmenting agonies, they plunge from depth to depth of woe.

And heaven ! There all is silent—except those awful thunderings—voices of the Throne of God,* while every angel hides his sad visage beneath his sheltering wings. A holy sorrow reigns throughout the celestial world, until the voice of God proclaims that exalted mercy—“ *Love hath found a ransom.*” Love found a ransom ? hail, eternal Love !

The Voice of God walks among the trees of Eden—(*Gen.* iii. 8). How their hearts were wont to bound with delight when thus He sought them—but now, they vainly flee to hide their terror, guilt, and shame ; for “ *Adam, where !* ”—(*Idem*, iii. 9)—brings forth the guilty ones ; and each makes exact confession of the truth. No lie to God augments their sin. They hear their penalty. And oh, it is mercy when compared with those appalling, agonizing doubts. They are told they may no longer stay in Eden. That they had surely then have died, had not Love undertaken for them. That they may still obtain eternal life, but must first pass under the hand of death—(*Idem*, iii. 19). That henceforth everything will war against their life, death constantly following their steps ; a perpetual terror, because they can never know *when*

* *Rev.* iv. 5.

he will claim their forfeit lives. That if obedient to God's will, He still will bless them. That on the morrow, His Sabbath, they shall slay and burn a lamb, and thus on every seventh day. That their ransom from immediate death is *blood*; and this lamb, Love's mysterious type of ONE through whose death their repentant souls may find eternal life and joy.

They have lost Eden, but they live; and they would have given a thousand Edens to escape from Death, although they do not yet know him. That they are permitted to *live*, is now indeed a bliss! When they first heard the Serpent's doom pronounced, and saw him, stripped of all his beauty, become a mere worm, and slink, scarce living, amid the grass,* they felt an awful fear. But soon that blessed promise comes—"the woman's seed that is to bruise the Serpent's head." Is not this Love? To announce in that dark hour of their woe, their future triumph over their great enemy?—what else but Love, would thus in this hour of their shame assure them of such a victory; what else but Love, thus assuage their guilty fear? True sorrow, toil,†

* Gen. iii. 14, 15.

† Gen. iii. 16—19.

and death, are before them—but the blessed ray of hope is there also to cheer them. *They* were not cursed, *they* are not excluded from God's love. Redeeming Love hath promised even more than they have lost ; that through some great future sacrifice they shall attain an everlasting glorious substitute for Eden ; a sacrifice, future to them, but received already by God, whose eternal purpose once formed, is then achieved. And all that is demanded of them is that they should *believe* God. This was all He asked before—believe, love, obey ; for a true belief includes all. It *was* to have secured them the possession of Eden, and now, it forms the path to future bliss. They *do* believe—there is no place left in their hearts for doubt ; that awful fear, cast it out ; that stern reality that would have consumed them if Love had not been there. Eternity can never efface the memory of those torments of self-born agony they endured. They are not abandoned ; Love will not disdain their prayer, and though they cannot lose the stain of Sin while they remain on earth, their humbled souls reject his dominion : they are despoiled and ruined ; they have lost their bliss ; but triumphant Love brings back their souls to the love of God.

And now let us leave awhile the suffering man, to examine with reverence these wonderful mysteries of the love of God. Let us endeavour to contemplate the beautiful terrors and glories of the eternal throne ; to conceive inflexible justice combined with unchanging purity and with illimitable power ; to behold the glittering millions that attend His will ; to realize the exhaustless flame that lights the world of space, and preserves their order. That great God formed this fair earth for His pleasure ; a work of love that filled all heaven with amazement, and caused the morning stars to sing with joy ;* then Man—made in His own bright image, and partaker of His eternal breath. The sweet plan of *Love* was all complete. Admiring angels sang His munificence in anthems as they gazed. God loves His work, and demands in return, love from the creature He has formed, and whom He has exempted, by the impartance of an emanation from Himself, from pain and death. While pure and true, eternal youth is his. He has attributes and powers that enable him to converse with God, whose voice walks in the garden where He has placed him, and in which Love has

* Psalm i. 5.

lavished the fairest treasures of her hands for his delight. Is anything wanting to his bliss? He hath but one restraint, one that involves no loss of pleasure, but is a mere abstention from what is not capable of giving joy, in proof that he owes love and pure obedience to his Maker. To eat, is to rebel ; it is to set up Man's sovereignty—to withdraw from God's dominion, to make the will of Man the law of Man's existence. Death is to be the penalty of such an outrage to the Deity. At the instigation of Sin, he commits this outrage, in the expectation of obtaining some new joys, some higher degree of power than that he already possesses. The penalty attaches in the act. Instead of obtaining power, his own self-accusing thought thunders forth his ruin. Self condemned, he waits in inconceivable agony his doom. And what do we behold? Eternal Love step forth from the bosom of Deity—stay the hand of consuming wrath, and cry, “On me the penalty.” Love, bars the way to Justice ; Love, will redeem the sinner. Though Man hath marred her cherished work ; hath spoiled her delight, and yielded earth to soil, pollution, death, decay—all fiendish discord and excess—to all the hosts of hell ; though Justice may, in one moment, sweep the demon stain from the

face of nature; *Love*, who loves what she hath loved, turns the vengeance aside; and though she may not snatch the prey from the hard hand of Death, obtains for Man awhile his forfeit life; and offers future rescue at a cost that shall convulse the fabric of the universe. Man having now lost earth, must dwell with the vile spawn of Sin, whose dominion in it he has himself established; for instead of gaining empire for himself, he hath transferred it to the demon host. The world of innocence is gone; it is henceforth the world of dying man and of triumphant demons. Love withdraws a portion of her blessed warmth, and with it many of her beauties. Man must pass through the gloomy gate of the cold grave. But Love is near, to save his ruined soul. He knows good, and evil. His destiny is in his own hands. But Love, who will not leave him to struggle unaided with the demons he has brought around him, pursues, admonishes, entreats, and strives to gain his heart from the fell power of self-condemning sin. "Behold," she cries, "the lamb you slay is a type of Him who pays your ransom. Though you had never known another sinful stain, *that* sin remained; no future duty could cancel *that*, for duty is what you owe. That sin barred the way to the throne of

mercy. Vengeance would but have been deferred—but I have fully paid that hopeless debt. Believe and love. Death will then but transfer you—glorious, immortal—to eternal bliss. Creative Love alone could have made this world ; Redeeming Love alone could break the chain of Sin ; and it is Eternal Love alone that never forsakes its object.”

Grant then, O Love, that we may be able to open our hearts to thee—that we may live in thy light, and partake of thy glory.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST SACRIFICE.

CHILD of vanity ! Creature of earth ! Is thy heart shut against an offending child ? Is it pitilessly closed against some other of thy fellow mortals who has done thee real or fancied wrong, and incurred thy displeasure ? Think, in this stern hour of thy pride, thou descendant of that unhappy fallen Adam, how Love Divine, that had been so outraged, interposed between thy first parents and that awful justice which was ready to destroy them ; extending her protecting hand to mitigate the rigours of an inevitable condemnation. Remember, and bow with reverence and fear as thou dost remember, that in Adam, thou wert then a culprit ; and that Love Divine, though grieved and outraged, restrained and controlled the anger of thy God ! Thus didst thou find mercy instead of inexorable vengeance ! And a day will come when once again thou must stand before Him and await thy doom. Love, and only

Love, can then shield thee from His hand. It is an awful thought for creatures who cannot escape death and judgment. And He has sworn, *that as thou hast pardoned even thus shalt thou be judged*. Let love therefore prevail over anger in thy heart, lest in that great hour of thy final need, thou shouldst have cause to bewail her absence.

Art thou one to whom great wealth hath been confided? Hast thou thought that because thy thousands are freely given in ostentatious alms or works, thou canst thus purchase peace and safety for thy soul, leaving unfulfilled sweet Love's express command of the humble heart's obedient charity?—that with gold thou canst appease the justice of heaven, and purchase mercy for sins that outrage Love? What God imperatively demands from thee, as from Adam, is obedience; and since He has commanded thee *to forgive*, thine unappeased anger is as open a rebellion as was that eating of the forbidden fruit. If that anger be in thy heart, thou hast no true humility of soul—thy fancied piety is a deadly snare—thy prayers are hopeless. Thou mayst clothe thyself in sackcloth, sit in ashes, and raise proud structures in what thou callest honour of God—but keep thine angry sin, and all thou canst obtain

is vengeance. Thou hast concealed thyself from thine own flesh, and for thee no mercy can ever smile. Thou mayst swell some convent's treasured hoards to show the munificence of thy penitence, but to a Holy God—to Him, the God of Love—thine alms are an insult—thy fasts a mockery—thine incense fetid—thy penitence a sham! Priests or popes may absolve thee for thy gold, but God and conscience will assuredly condemn. Seek, then, repentance. Christ has shed His blood that cancels every sin; bid love take the place of anger in thy heart—and *then* that blood will not have been shed for thee in vain!

Love is an active principle. Her eye dwelleth ever fondly on her erring children. She doth not say, "Thou hast rebelled—go, take the consequences of thy conduct—henceforth thou art at least indifferent to me." Her hand will be always present, secretly or openly to assuage their misery. Reader, hast thou ever thought that the hand of vengeance drove the rebel pair from Eden?* Amend thy judgment, for thou has greatly erred. It was the guardian hand of Love. Never attempt to measure

* Gen. iii. 23.

the decrees of unerring wisdom by the mean, paltry standard of earthly littleness, but let your estimate be such as beseems the overwhelming majesty of God!

Man having formed alliance with Sin, there is nothing to impede the whole race of fiends from overrunning the earth. The taint is already in his blood; and in his issue they will obtain such dominion, that all rule will virtually be theirs. Adam may bewail his error, but he can never regain the purity that he has lost; and his whole hope of future bliss, through Redeeming Love, depends upon his being subject to the power of Death, who, notwithstanding his fearful aspect, is thus most his friend. Yet nature will loathe Death; and Man may clutch at earthly immortality to escape those terrors that so appal him. Eden's grounds contain another tree of peculiar character. As to eat of the tree of knowledge entailed the penalty of death, so, to eat of this, renders death impossible. It is the tree of life! May not Man take of this, and thus close the door through which alone heaven can permit his entry into bliss? May he not thus eternize on the earth a vile, rebellious race, inhabited by demons, constantly hurling defiance at the Almighty in their

accursed state of pain and anguish, that converts this precious earth into another hopeless hell? Man has shown his weakness, and Love, whose watchful eye beholds this peril—(*Gen.* iii. 22)—now averts it. He shall remove. He is commanded to depart, and to till the ground from which his body was taken.

They turn their backs on Eden! One who desired to represent a profound depth of woe, and who felt how such grief mocks all the power of art that would depict or portray it, withheld the face of the mourner—covering it with a veil. So let us act with these poor exiles from Eden. As earth can never again know such a bliss as theirs had been, so never can it view another grief like theirs, save in *His* soul whose cruel death on Calvary repairs this overwhelming loss.

They turn their backs on Eden! Their new-born care, though evil in itself, is now a very good in evil. It prevents their being absorbed by that irreparable loss. The necessities of existence now for the first time press upon them. Life is no more a thing of mere joy and sport, even for Eve; while Adam feels that his beloved wife depends on his exertions. Poor Eve! poor mother of our race! The thorn of deep contrition is deeply lacerating the

heart ! Thy frailty hath brought this grief and sorrow ; this bitter exile, shame, and death ! Thy love, when thou wert listening to that Tempter, was athirst to make thy husband great ; for, oh, I see thy loving, lovely heart, dear Eve ; it was most for *him*—to make *him* like a god ; and this has led to the sad fall of both. But he loves thee, Eve ; and he will show how much his earthly happiness depends upon thy love.

They turn their backs on Eden ! Behold them now arrived at that same spot where Adam first threw his admiring glances over this fair world ! Is it not Love that made this choice for him ? What place so dear, after Eden, as that where God created him ; where He fashioned his dust, and breathed into it His breath of flame ; where the fond, obsequious beasts thronged to do him honour ; and where first his enraptured ears drank in the flood of feathered harmony, that welcomed the advent of the Lord of Earth ? Here, too, are fruits and flowers growing beside a branch from that same lovely stream of Eden, now roseate and glowing in the rich beams of the setting sun. Oh, God is not like man ! He hath not crushed his erring dust with His almighty power ! Vengeance and mercy

came together ; the one protected while the other frowned ; and all-bounteous Love was there to re-create, when Justice had pronounced the doom. All the conditions of life are now new ; and all man's sensations are equally novel. He cannot but deplore his most ungrateful fall ; care will oppress him, while Death haunts him with terrors ; but, even as the ivy springs up amid some vast ruin, and flowering creepers adorn with life and beauty the crumbling mass to which they cling, so will the rich treasures of affection spread their sweet blessings over this ruin of creation. Man hath lost his bliss ; but happiness, pleasure, is not dead.

Hope is already comforting the heart of Adam, and he speaks comfort to her who so much needs it ; whose more feeble nature now clings to his for support. "Look around, dear, sweet Eve—raise your fair head, my loved and cherished wife. I love thee more than ever, Eve ; look around without dismay ; God has been merciful ; He did not kill ; we live—we have not been changed like that vile Serpent ; we *love*—is not this happiness ? we will obey—and He will bless us, dear Eve ! Has He not promised, too, that after death we shall dwell immortal in eternal bliss ? True, we have greatly

sinned, but His love remains with us, my Eve! Look here! Behold this spot; it is not Eden; but it is a pretty plain; and here, where we now stand, I first stood when God had made me! Oh, these strong arms shall make it fruitful, Eve! See, here are lovely flowers! Come, cheer thee, loved one—thou shalt see—I will weave sweet coronals for that dear, dear head; for you are still earth's Queen; and earth will never know another like my Eve! Why tremble thus, dear wife! There is no more to fear. Nay, but you tremble like some shaken leaf—courage, courage, my Eve!" "Adam—it is not fear—but—there is some great change—in me—in all around us; even you have lost your warmth, though your strong nature and your stronger mind refuse to yield, like mine. O Adam—can it be—Adam—can—this—be—*death*?" "No, no, dear Eve! Has He not promised that your seed shall bruise the Serpent's head? He cannot fail in anything that He has said; He is immutable, and just, and good; He can neither change nor lie. Believe—believe Him, Eve." "Adam, I *do* believe . . . Oh, would we had our cave—our bed! . . . The sun will soon be gone, and this strange feeling grows, and grows upon me! Oh, I was blest!

And I was gay as the dear little birds that build their pretty nests in those sweet flowers—and are always charming with their happy hum—and I—I have lost it all—all—Adam, and I have ruined thee!” “Nay, nay, loved wife—here, rest beneath this tree—and I will go and search.” “*Oh, leave me not! I fear!* Oh, never—never leave me, Adam; it will be all dark if you are gone; you are all my light and all my strength! Oh, I am weak, indeed, if you are not with me! I will go with thee, and together—Adam! the angel! what new sorrow is to burst upon us now?”

Poor, poor Eve! But the angel consoles her. His is a mission of Love; the anger is past—God is appeased, and they are saved. “Do not now repine,” he adds, “the past cannot be recalled; and faith, and penitence, and love, will bring you rich blessings down from heaven. Love, that made you, and that saved you, will never leave you, if you do not forget her. My coming is a proof; you suffer—I am here, to bring you what Love knows you have need of. There is a change in all things, but close at hand is what you were about to seek. Death, who was not allowed to touch your lives, hath taken others for your dear sakes. Some beasts have already died,

and their skins will relieve you of the cold you feel. You must be covered now. You cannot bear nakedness any longer. So much of Love's warmth has gone from earth, and from you that which would have maintained in you perpetual youth, that all things now will suffer cold, and change, and pain. But God has not taken from you any part of that high intelligence with which He had endowed you; and this will enable you to provide against what affects your senses. You will need really to labour now, for earth will not bring forth any good thing spontaneously; and what there is good, if you do not attend to it, will soon deteriorate. At this sudden change you could not live without the direct aid of Love, and therefore she hath sent you succour. Dig, plant, and sow, and you will get abundance, for God will give blessings in return for love and service. You will want neither fruit, nor corn, nor peace, if you obey Him. God has already commanded you to kill a lamb to-morrow, and on every seventh day, as a sacrifice and offering to Him. It is you who must destroy the lamb, because it is your sin that kills. First, place both your hands on its head, and God will accept its life instead of yours. Make a pile of earth on the hill—place wood upon

it—and there slay the lamb, so that its blood may be afterwards consumed.* Remove the skin. Look up to God with penitence and praise, moving a little way off, but keeping your eyes fixed on that poor victim ; and, to show that God receives Love's great atonement for you, a fire from heaven will descend and will consume it. The sun has gone, and you have need of rest. Let your prayers ascend to Him, and remember that there is no secret hid from His all-seeing eye—that every thought rising in your bosoms stands revealed in His pure and holy presence."

* * * * *

The curling wreaths of smoke ascend. Faith and obedience have produced their fruit. They feel that God hath smiled ; and a delicious confidence and peace steal softly through their hearts, dispelling much of their gloomy fear. When Adam destroyed that substituted life, an awful dread shook both their souls with terror, though their eyes were so fascinated that they, still shrinking, sought what they feared to look upon. Eve would fain have fled, but she had lost all power ; she remained as if rooted there, and with trembling anguish watched that

* Lev. i.

stream of reeking blood ; but when the exhausted victim gave up its last breath, overwhelmed she fell prostrate on the ground. And, oh, bitter, fast, vehement were her tears and choking sobs. Her soul in its deep agony prayed for pardon. She first realised the full enormity of her sin, in beholding what it is—to die !

Alas ! how soon to the choral anthem of earth's first Sabbath, has succeeded this one's bleeding sacrifice. There stand those forty days of unsullied joy, a small oasis on the blasted plains of earth. It is well for the eye of Faith to gaze on them, and meditate on their delights, while, linked with Hope, she points to eternal bliss.

Have you ever watched some lovely infant grow up to become a foul polluted thing of crime ; robbed by debauchery of every trace of that sweet innocence which so embellished it ; raising, in blasphemy to heaven, eyes once as pure as its own loveliest sky ? There you have a picture of what Eden was, and what the world shall be. But do not stop there. Extend the sphere of your vision. The eye of Faith will show you the purging fire destroying every stain of earth ; the foul and guilty soul made pure by saving grace ; the world, recovered by Love, become

an eternal home of the spirits of the blest ; and man, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, rising with Him triumphant and immortal !

O Love Divine ! thou incomparable brightness of glory ! did I not view thy blessed light—did not thy lambent flame animate my spirit—could I not see thee always near, and trace thy beams on every sullied page of this world's record, among all its gloom and blood—did I not by faith behold thy glory, destroying earthly fame, and ending earth's pollution and the woe of man—I had never essayed to trace his future course, but left him fallen, ruined, lost, at the gate of Eden ! Where some wave-worn bark, battered by the furious tempest, plunges head-long from the realms of day to the gloomy depths of ocean, whose whelming waters fill up, with an impetuous rush, the awful traceless grave—the happier mariner glides over the place of woe, without a thought of what lies hid beneath, engrossed by the care of bringing his own vessel safely to her destined port. Thus should I have passed over this young world's ruin, with the mere tribute of a sad and fleeting sigh. But, as I view thy name written in those blazing letters of eternity over the head of wretched man, and see thy finger tracing, in characters of

glory, that precious word IMMORTALITY, relying on
thine aid I boldly take my way where human reason
would have otherwise withdrawn in hopeless fear.
It is thy work, O Love ; be it thine to enable this
weak hand to trace the course of thy matchless
light on earth.

CHAPTER VI.

DEATH'S FIRST HUMAN VICTIM.

MAN'S labour now begins. But Love is never absent, and gives heavenly wisdom in answer to prayer. Every seventh day beholds the repetition of that sacrifice, and its rising smoke is viewed with grateful hearts by those who do not now worship in terror, but whose humbled souls are attracted by love to God. Days, weeks, months pass away in varied toil—to obtain subsistence from the now less yielding earth, and clear it from the destroying parasites that have begun to infest it, and eat up its richness ; to deck their home with flowers ; to plant their hill with trees, that may give delight and nourishment with their blossoms and their fruit. In tending his little flock, and tilling his ground, Adam finds continually some new surprise. He has formed a refreshing bed with the long dried grass, spread over with the soft skins of those sacrificial lambs ; and the graceful, grateful swans have come down

from Eden, floating their plummy beauty near his home. Oh, how gratefully Eve welcomed those first feathered darlings, and some beauteous doves, that sought at the same time her notice and Adam's corn, paying for it every morning by their sweet, cooing, loving voices. The lark still mounts in the glowing sky—a host of other songsters of the day amuse her with their clear, pure voices ; and the nightingale, by her sweet melancholy notes, relieves the hours of night with luscious melody. Eve, repentant and comforted, has learned to smile again with joy ; and the soft charms of mutual love shed their happiness in both their hearts. The changing moon hath often renewed her course since this new scene of human life began, and Eve, amid the piercing pangs of parturition, suffers her own especial woes—woes soon forgotten, when returning day shows her her little child. God hath bestowed a man ! life laughs in both—and the thankful, joyous mother calls him CAIN.

How little does she think, as her beaming eyes stream floods of fondness over this fairy creature, and her bursting breast yields up its treasures to those little lips ; or Adam, as his throbbing heart welcomes this image of himself, and he holds in his

hand the treasured life, small as he saw his Eve in that blessed vision ; and feels, as then, the tiny fingers playing among all the fibres of his heart—that *this*, which gives them so much joy, shall spill the blood of a brother ! shall be the first to bring Death among the human race, and curses on his own guilty head !

Oh, it is indeed Love's deep, heavenly wisdom, that hides from man his coming pleasures and his future woes ; celestial mercy, that keeps from his eye what revolving time too soon reveals—the glittering, trenchant blade that hangs suspended over him by a single fragile thread—and only bit by bit unrolls the chequered plan of his existence, not even allowing him to behold what the next hour or minute may bring forth. Their little babe is thus a perfect joy to them. His little wants give fresh employment to hands and thoughts. This parental love, now first known, imparts new zest to their mutual love, and gives birth to many new delights. Their sin will receive through him a heavy chastisement ; and yet he now brings them a perfect, full content. Is not this a design that only Love could form ? The dark image of their guilt does not appear in that little, cherished face. Reason does

not link this child in any way with their fall. It cannot enter into their minds that he may bear the brand of their great pollution, averted from them by Love. Could they have seen, and known, or imagined this, that gushing fount of pleasure would have been poisoned at its source ; and, instead of watching the infant's increasing strength with a daily joy, they must have beheld it with terror and dismay. Is it not *Love*, thus to deck a future bier with sweetest flowers? Thus is a happy hamlet formed in some lovely Alpine valley ; the eternal snows that crown the summit of the mountain, instead of inspiring terror, delight and charm with the roseate hues they wear, as the rays of the rising or setting sun falls upon them ; rural labour obtains its rich reward ; clamorous echo laughs with the mirth and song of healthy joyous hinds ; peace is there ; they love ; they wed ; the voice of childhood thrills the hearts of parents, and makes the rough cleft rocks rejoice ; but, in a moment, down thunders the mighty avalanche, blending hamlet, life, and joy, in one dire and awful ruin.

Nothing short of unerring wisdom would have thus ordained that care and sorrow should fall on man by surprise. He desires to foresee, to fore-

know, and is perpetually the dupe of this desire, which Love refuses to gratify because it is a thirst that is really installed by hate. It is Love, who made him, that hides them from him. It is Sin, who ruined him, that would reveal them to him, throwing an added bitter into his cup—a foreknowledge of all his woes, with an impossibility of escaping or forgetting them.

Abel, the child of penitence and prayer, is born. A numerous, lovely band of sons and daughters, spreads life and gladness round this happy home. Children, and children's children come to Eve for her caresses, and to Adam for his blessing. Happy households spread about the plain. The earth is not niggard in its rewards of labour. The love of flowers, ever so strong in Eve, characterizes all her race; and floral beauty, therefore, abounds. That river, in all its course, far as the eye can reach, is now embellished by the proud swan's snowy beauty; bold chanticleer salutes the opening day; there is an ever-increasing harmony in the sky by the joyous notes of the feathered songsters; milch kine are lowing; the bleatings of the flock of sacrifice rise sweet to heaven; Love smiles on all; abundance reigns everywhere; and the cold hand of Death

hath never dared to touch the human race with his corrupting finger. He contents himself with a tribute from the meaner tribes of earth, and waits respectful on her line of kings. God's image is still there, and glorious, though the bright sun of immortality hath set. Death knows too well, alas, that a just doom hath made them his prey ; but he awaits the mandate before he may begin to slay.

And, had not Sin urged man to anticipate man's doom, who shall dare to fix a limit to God's indulgence, and say how long a time Death might have had to wait ? God could not view His own image with disdain ; and Love, hovering over the wreck of her delightful work, stayed the hand of corruption from dishonouring man. He was subject to Death, but, even when Cain had made that sovereignty effective, God permitted Adam to live for nearly a thousand years before Death should touch him. Thousands of years might well have passed, and God's image never once been effaced from clay. But, as in Eden man rebelled, so now again he thrusts the hand of Love aside. God had announced man's doom ; and, though He may in love suspend it, Sin will not allow man to accept the mercy.

Who that hath never seen the ocean with other

than her bright, calm face, on which the floating bird scarce softly dances, so gentle are its undulations, can imagine what she is, when lashed by the furious tempest, her huge billows swell, rising like mountains—roaring at the blast, and spitting defiance at the angry skies ; when, instead of softly murmuring on the sand, she hurls the proud bark against the frowning rocks, with such resistless might, such fearful hate, that some few torn and riven planks alone remain to prove a ship was there. So Adam deems not, when he looks upon his first-born son, that Murder's spawn is lurking in his brain ; and that fearful passions, the progeny of Sin, are only waiting a spark to commence the awful havoc of death.

That spark is the Divine displeasure. Cain comes as a rebel before God. He will offer no longer what God commands as a type of Love, but something of his own choice—that which his own reason approves—the fruits of labour, in evidence of what man can obtain despite the obstructing curse of God. Rationalistic infidelity thus appears very early on the world's stage ; then, as it will ever be, the parent of destruction. Abel, on the contrary, has received the truth with a really humble heart. He has

learned God's gracious promise ; believes in it with joy ; confesses with sorrow his parent's sin and his own, and kneels in spirit at the throne of God. Love reveals to him her precious truths, and shows him by faith the prize of eternal life. The flock of sacrifice is dear to him—he tends it with the fondest care, and ever offers the spotless lamb on the appointed day. His is a true humility: his father's prayers, the tale of bitter woe that he has heard, and his fond mother's tears, have sunk deep within his soul. But the proud heart of Cain doubts the sin, and denounces the remedy. He was in the womb of Eve when she fell a prey to the Tempter, and the power of man's mortal foe is strong upon him. God shall not be what He declares Himself to be. Reason thus weighs Him ; and weighing, reason dares to condemn Him—"Why did He make that tree, if the fruit was not to be eaten ? Either He is not almighty, or He is not all good." Cain revolts at the sacrifice ; he loathes the sight of blood ; he cannot view it without a feeling of strange disturbance.* A shuddering chill, combined with what seems like a trembling flame, spreads through all his being ;

* Robespierre is said to have been peculiarly affected by the sight of blood.

something akin to his mother's sensation when she first beheld the life stream. No lamb shall bleed, no beast shall groan, no blood be poured out for him. He will bring some of the bounty of earth, her choicest fruits, as his offering. During many years he has concealed these sentiments and feelings ; but now, who shall forbid the change. He feels no sin ; he will not confess what he does not feel ; and thus he stands erect in fancied righteousness and open rebellion. At this daring scorn, Love withdraws her protecting hand from the sinner, and leaves him alone with his demon prompter. He does not choose some solitude, where, unobserved, he may try what will be the result of his new system, but flings at once a bold defiance at God ; there—over against the pile prepared by his brother—face to face with him, will he erect his own, and offer his well-selected fruits. Abel implores him to place his hands, with him, on the lamb he has brought ; or—the fold is near—he will bring another for him alone—he intreats—he urges, since God has never failed to accept that offering. But no ; and behold, the lamb on the one altar, the fruits on the other. Who shall depict the rage of Cain when fire from heaven consumed the lamb, his fruits remaining there untouched—rejected.

The livid cloud of hideous passion gathers on the late expectant face of Cain ; and, alas ! it is most dread in what it hides ; as that which spreads over the summer sky, obscuring the sun, and throwing at mid-day over the earth the hue of night, contains the flaming arrows of destroying lightning, and the torrents of the devastating flood. But Love, though she had ceased to restrain, does not yet abandon the sinner. God speaks from out the skies to his erring child, and shows him why he has failed to obtain acceptance,—(*Gen. iv. 6.*) Behold, the rebel kneels—kneels ? Alas ! thoughts of fury respond to the accents of Divine Mercy ; offended pride flames up with deadly rage against the Most High, scorns all forgiveness, and will wage the unequal war. Abel, who saw the offering rejected, and hastened to the fold, now returns with a lamb. “Quick, brother ! quick !—thy hands upon its head ;” “*If He must have blood, let Him take thine ;*” the fatal blow falls with the impious words, and kills the loving brother who urged him to reconciliation with his God. A pitiless demon has taken possession of Cain ; human nature is obscured in him ; hell is in his breast ; the impatient fiend gains his long-sought victory ; Death lays his hand on the earthly image of God ; and, for

the first time, effaces it. Man, lost and ruined man, upbraids the heavenly mercy that has shielded human life, and first applies to man the doom pronounced for sin. There is grief in heaven !

Weep, angels ! weep !
Man a brother's blood hath shed,
Soul from mortal clay hath sped ;
Weep, angels ! weep !

Weep, angels ! weep !
Human blood the earth hath stained,
Sin another victory gained ;
Weep, angels ! weep !

Weep, angels ! weep !
Man no longer kneels to heaven,
Prays no more to be forgiven ;
Weep, angels ! weep !

Weep, angels ! weep !
See with daring front he stands,
Blood's deep stains defile his hands ;
Weep, angels ! weep !

Weep, angels ! weep !
With trumpet clangour through the skies,
Each warm drop for vengeance cries ;
Weep, angels ! weep !

There lies the brother whom God had dared to prefer. Hath he not conquered in the strife ? No repentance follows the dreadful deed. His heart is so scorched and seared by the fiery breath of in-

fernal hate, that he who could not endure to see the blood of a lamb in sacrifice, shrinks not at that so much more fearful death, but, with dark, hideous, lowering brows, scans unmoved this bloody ruin. His guilty soul is caressed by the pride of conscious power. His—his own hand can avenge all fancied wrongs, and take the life of the offenders. He lifts his daring gaze to heaven, as if it might be possible to slay the Eternal! There is no fear, no prayer; but stern defiance. *He hath power to kill!* What can the Almighty more?

He buries, however, the poor dishonoured dead. This is his first involuntary confession of inferiority. With that strange blindness which Sin imparts, he fancies, as no immediate notice is taken by God, that his actions are unobserved; that though God was present at the sacrifice, He is only occasionally cognizant of what passes on earth; a delusion that will prevail throughout all earthly time. Mark with what rapidity Sin is bringing man under an entire subjection to him. When Adam transgressed, he hid himself; and, challenged by God, made an entire confession of his disobedience. But Cain—he flies not; and when the voice from heaven demands account of his brother, he lies contemptuously to the

Almighty. "And the Lord said, Where is Abel thy brother?"—(*Gen.* iv. 9.) "And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" It is as though he said, "I thought he was the object of your care." But, as in all contention with God, the triumph soon ends. A voice, until now unheard, penetrates the soul of Cain, and defiance, vanquished, dies. He feels that the curse pronounced is not a mere empty form of words or a distant contingency, but an immediate reality. There is no repentance—but *he fears*; that is all. How precious in the sight of God is the life of one of his reconciled children! "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." And now Cain is sensible of the curse working within him; he trembles for his own life. Cursed from the earth, which shall no more yield him her strength in return for his labour—compelled, therefore, to seek some other mode of subsistence—a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth, he in imagination beholds Death in shapes of fearful horror, ever ready to exact the penalty of his forfeit life. Still he repents not, for he hath abandoned Love; but a shrinking dread is upon him,—will haunt his footsteps—and cling around him, like some poisonous reptile, stinging his every joy to death.

He welcomes the murderer's brand as a diminution of his danger.

Men comply readily enough with the Divine command to increase and multiply. In fifteen hundred years the human race has spread abroad far—far from Eden. Self-exiled from the face of God, Cain, with his impenitent heart, and his protecting brand, despising alike his father's prayers, the hateful sacrifice, and those who offer it, removes to the opposite side of Eden. The corruption spreads. Many in their hearts soon applaud what they would never have conceived or dared ; and, acknowledging him thus as superior, he obtains their homage. Crime raises him to power, as it has done with many since his day. Men who will not yield to the sweet government of heavenly Love, who would bless them both in time and for eternity, accept readily enough the yoke of fraud, and force, and lies. This is the result of that empire which Sin has established in the heart, for he wars incessantly against human happiness, causing his victims, who, with immortal longings that date from Eden, have an inextinguishable thirst of it, to seek it in all things and places where it is impossible it should be found. Cain's heart is rebel at the very core. "Earth shall

not yield her strength?"—very well, he says, I am not going to work for less than I have done hitherto—let her keep it—I till no more. "A vagabond on the earth"—solitude is fearful for him—he builds a city. Though accursed, he hath issue; though accursed, many admire, and none dare to scorn the brand-protected murderer; though accursed, he will live in fame, while the city he founds shall continue to be called after his son Chanock. Is it to be wondered at that the huge cities of the world have ever been full of monstrous crime, whose voice is continually ascending to heaven, until some righteous judgment purges away the pollution? The cultivated tracts, the unpeopled solitudes, witness, alas! abundant acts of individual crime—Cain murdered Abel there; but in cities, the first of which was the device of a murderer, crime naturally masses itself. Crime is ever rampant, and guilt ever seeking refuge in them, even as the first showed the pride and concealed the fear of that daring shedder of human blood. How different might cities have been, and how glorious, had the heavenly type in man from which they sprang, been first made in God's honour—not for man's guilty fear and pride.

Cain is dead, but murder thrives. I believe

there never has been one solitary form of guilt introduced on earth, that has not propagated itself. Guilt hath its immortality in time and hell, as Love hath in time and heaven. Earth begins to shout aloud with violence ; for, cities having multiplied, poor human life falls a prey to many various passions ; ambition, avarice, lust—all claim their victims by thousands ; the whole demon race is running riot over the earth ; the most loathsome scum of the infernal regions enters into the fallen Immortal, and thus takes human birth.

What a grand, sublime, magnificent discovery it was, that man could drive out God's own breath from the fragile form of his fellow man ; and thus, in destroying, triumph for a season over heaven ! Life, that pearl in man, was the precious gift of God, who would protect and protract it ; but man robs the gift, and casts the pearl away, for he cannot appropriate it. Is he not an insensate fool, to make himself thus the wretched idiot-slave of laughing fiends, whose great desire is to chase their prey from earth, lest Love should save him ; and who prompt him, therefore, to dig his own grave ?

Adam remained faithful ; and, through Seth, there is a seed that still clings to Love, and worships

God. They bear the proud title of the Sons of God. But the spreading cities make mighty and constant inroads among them. That aggregation commenced by guilt, proves irresistible to fallen man. Sin, who is perpetually placing germs of discord in his heart, leads him where they may show most vigorous life. In these cities men have grown in their own conceit, until Man is the only god man recognises. That high intelligence originally bestowed by Love, having freed itself from her dominion, pursues the road of all invention that may minister to the gratification of the senses, held in dominion, and debased and depraved by Sin. These are made primary in existence ; and intellect, the accessory, is actively employed in their service. Sin soon reaps large harvests. If one man had singly braved the Almighty, and, unrepentant, had been spared and had prospered, what could be hoped from a combination of his issue ? They stimulate each other. One devises—imagines—another strains to execute ; the purpose grows ; it is realized ; it becomes a means of enjoyment ; a boast ; a marvel ; a pride ; a thing of fame. They look with pity and contempt on the tranquil frugal pleasures of rural life. They are ever seeking some new excess, they are ever panting

to be great. In this way objects originating in personal caprice, become the stimulants of general lust. This gives rise to separate callings ; to barter, which is full of provocations that engender strife ; strife engendered seeks the aid of strength to gratify its fury ; strength that can thus gratify becomes power ; and power once quaffed is not easily satisfied. Ambition uses men's passions, and obtains rule and dominion. Withdrawn from the restraining influences of intercourse with God, men regard this world as all their own, and determine to grasp all that it contains. While they acknowledged God, they offered beasts in sacrifice to him, as typical of the great atonement made for man that was to be visibly consummated on Calvary ; now, they kill and *eat*. Sin speaks to them, and counsels them, precisely as he did with Eve in Eden. "What God denies, or has withheld, far exceeds in value and enjoyment what He has given." They taste. Corn, fruit, and herb no longer satisfy their palates ; the flesh of flocks and herds must be added. The grape has revealed the secret charm concealed beneath its white or purple skin—life, when it is used with temperate gratitude ; but all evil when it is misused. Eve's daughters have not been slow in discovering

the power of their charms—the mighty influence they may wield—and Woman employs all her art to make Man sensually blest on earth. A tender luxury springs up and grows around her, to wake desire, and stimulate the palling appetite. The profound subtleties of passion begin to weave their meshes for creatures who now acknowledge no sovereignty but that of their senses. And man, in his turn striving to gain their favour, supplies with a liberal hand that luxury which is thus made to minister to delight, in order that it may be employed for him, and that he may be caressed. These powerful wiles prove resistless to the rural sons of God, when they are brought within the sphere of their influence. Sweet music, soft indulgence, revelry—gay dance and song—and woman's calculated witchery, combined, are all too mighty for the slippery seed of Adam. They come, they taste, they yield, they are enslaved. Sin was merely slumbering, waiting the spell that should arouse his energies within them. They marry with these fascinating creatures of the city. Females of their families thus brought within the vortex, are speedily corrupted ; and rival, if they do not surpass, their wanton sisters in all the subtleties of life.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE'S ENTREATIES ; MAN'S SCORN.—THE DELUGE.

AND yet insulted *Love* has not left them to struggle unaided with these temptations. Adam preached—confessed his sin before his descendants; showed them that in his frailty was the origin of all their evils; exposed the mystery of Eternal Love; and continually offered sacrifice, which fire from heaven always consumed. After Adam's death, *Love*, beholding how Sin's enticements drew men's treacherous hearts away from God—*Love*, untiring, ever condescending, ever stooping to the weakness of man, proves to him by a special heavenly visitation that he is *immortal*—that he has something more than this world to live for. She gives evidence of this to his mortal senses, revealing herself thus to these, in order to vanquish Satan's power over the mind of man, by showing the great sublime reality of his eternal inheritance.

Enoch, the fifth from Adam, in the line of Seth,

has received especial marks of Love's favour. No one has sought, in companionship with Adam, so ardently as he has, to know of the life of bliss in Eden, before the victory of Sin, and the entry of shame, woe, toil, and death into the world. In no other has faith given such clear views of the plan through which *Love* removes the stain from man, subdues his enemy, bestows on him her purity, renews his life, and gives eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven ; for none have so pierced by her aid, as he has done, through the deep gloom of death, and beheld the resuscitated body burst glorious from the tomb, mounting resplendent to share the immortality of its Redeemer. No other has therefore opposed the daily growing Sin, with such earnest persistence and such untiring zeal, or shown, as Enoch has, how fatal must be its onward course—how certain the wrath of God. He has reasoned with them, urged, entreated, warned, implored them. They generally speak well, who feel strongly. The secret of the mightiest eloquence is in a firm conviction. Enoch not only pointed to heaven, but trod the road that leads there. He was not only a minister of God, but he walked and lived with God ; and *Love*, therefore, selected him to demonstrate in

his person, a truth that ought to exercise a mighty influence over every heart.

The Patriarchs, and old and young, are summoned by God's command for an especial sacrifice, at which Enoch is to officiate. The venerable chiefs place their hands on the head of the victim—it is slain—and they kneel before the altar. Seth is there, Kenan, Malaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech—an unbroken line from Paradise to the Flood; Adam dead, and Noah yet unborn, alone being absent; while gathered round are all their descendants not yet totally estranged from God. The saint—the blessed Enoch, appeals to all on God's behalf. He tells of His love, and urges to obedience, duty, love, and faith. He shows that, with these, God bestows eternal life, which as far exceeds the vain delights after which man is striving, as do those vast bespangled skies this little realm of earth. He kneels. The sacrifice is consumed. A dazzling brilliance is over all the scene. A transcendent light, in presence of which the sun loses all his glory, envelops the altar and the saint. All eyes are captive; all sounds are dead, until the voice ineffable in Love, proclaims aloud this precious mystery, this eternal truth: "All that love

me shall rise from death to eternal bliss, as Enoch without death now ascends to heaven ; but those who forsake me have woe for ever."

One moment, and the patriarch is clothed with immortal beauty. A radiant host appears ; a flaming chariot blazes in all eyes ; conveyed by fiery steeds, Enoch leaves earth for heaven, exchanging human frailty for an endless youth, while the welkin rings with rapturous music of the angelic choirs :—

Welcome, first of mortal race,
To behold our Father's face ;
Never severed from His breath,
Never touched by hand of Death !

CHORUS—Love's decree,
Love's mystery ;
Love will ever reign supreme,
Angels' never-ending theme.

Welcome to these realms of light,
In His presence ever bright ;
No corruption in thy frame,
Thou, like us, art living flame.

CHORUS—Love's decree,
Love's mystery ;
Love will ever reign supreme,
Angels' never-ending theme.

Thou dost still thy body wear,
But what may with it compare !
Thou canst stand before the throne,
For its glories are thine own.

CHORUS—Love's decree,
 Love's mystery ;
 Love will ever reign supreme,
 Angels' never-ending theme.

Mortals, bow before His face,
 Who hath honoured thus your race
 Let His will be ever dear,
 Ye shall rise with Enoch there !

CHORUS—Love's decree,
 Love's mystery ;
 Love will ever reign supreme,
 Angels' never-ending theme.

* * * * *

Five hundred years have passed since Enoch was thus translated. Was that glorious scene long remembered ? It could not lightly fade from memory. But Sin did not find this proof of immortality at all conclusive. It was one thing to glorify and take up to heaven a living body, but very different to collect the scattered dust of every human creature from the four winds of heaven, reconstitute them so that they should be the same, and embellish them with eternal glory. If He intended all to become like Enoch, why did He not take them all in the same way ? Why did He allow Abel to be killed ? Why did He suffer Adam to die ? Enoch's was a solitary instance ; it proved nothing. The tide of Sin rolled on ; and, as Death continued his havoc

around, Faith perished in his presence. The attractions and the snares of the city prevailed. But there the record rests through every age of the world to the latest moment of time, an appeal from God to Man.

Love, her bounty and her promise, are almost universally forgotten and despised. Evil, violence, and blood are everywhere. Mercy veils her face, and Justice decrees a FLOOD that shall destroy every living thing, every pollution, every sinful joy, from off the face of the earth. But Noah finds favour for himself, and for his family. He alone is found righteous; he alone is covered with the robe of Love's purity, and, therefore, Love will save him. And though she is insulted, outraged—by men who were lately the sons of God, but who now, braving Almighty vengeance, exclaim in derisive answer to her fond entreaties, "Heaven is here"—she still allots a time for repentance and pardon.

Noah is commissioned to announce God's purpose. He exhorts and entreats men to make their peace with heaven. He tells of God's command to construct an ark, in which the seed of all things on earth may be preserved. Alas, it is to a constantly mocking crowd that he tells his awful errand. Who

ever heard of such a thing? Who could believe such an absurdity? The man is mad! But he whose soul, by faith, relies on heaven, can endure scoffing and ridicule. Bearing God's mandate to ruined man, he will rise superior to their gibes and sneers. Is he zealously disclosing the mind of heaven to others, he must give in himself the evidence of faith; for whatever in him presents the aspect of doubt, must throw discredit on his mission, and rob his words of power. Noah, therefore, begins at once to construct his ark, and every driven nail is a reproof of the sin around him. As year by year the structure grows, it speaks with a tongue that threatens and invites. But man is now full of scorn as regards God. He has lost all holy fear. He neither knows, indeed, nor will accept and listen to any other god than his own pleasures. To them he binds himself. Though one of them may tear and lacerate his suffering flesh, he clutches at, he hugs and caresses another; yet pierced anew, deceived and mangled though he be, in vain Love strives, even with her brightest smiles, to win him. His vision is so bleared, so foul, that the leer of Sin's most hideous seed is more attractive in his eyes, and he courts destruction in their filthy arms, spurning at

the same time *Love*, and the matchless attractions she displays." His visual organs have drunk so much of pollution's lurid flame, that her pure light is painful to him. And yet, O peerless beauty, Love Divine, what witchery thou hast for them who know thee ; who, having trod Sin's thorny labyrinth (for all is sinful that departs from God), marvel how earth can reject what is so fair ; and that all creation is not prostrate at the feet of Love, the palest beam of whose impassioned eye, eclipses all the boasted sorcery of hell !

There sits Love, on every added plank of Noah's great ark, wooing mankind to safety. But so dark has the human heart become—her smiles, her tears, her prayers are all in vain. Noah alone, of the whole human race, answers her neglected voice and bitter sighs, with faithfulness and zeal. He alone sees in anticipation the day when she will entreat no more, but wing her way to heaven, leaving the abandoned earth to wail, one bitter cry, in its drowning agony.

A century of the warning has passed unheeded. Another month has begun—the last these inhabitants of earth will know ; and yet, as Noah becomes more urgent, so do their scorn and derision increase

day by day. God's mercy in suspending judgments, sometimes hardens instead of softening men's hearts. When Lamech died, four years ago, the patriarch warned them that, as the structure was now complete, the fatal time could not be very far distant. Looks of contempt at what they called the enormous offspring of mad, drivelling folly, were all they deigned in reply. But the interior is also finished now, and the hoary Methuselah, 969 years old, sinks into his grave. The first two hundred years of his life he had passed with Enoch, at the side of Adam. Paradise was thus made familiar to his youthful mind. The sixteen hundred years, the world's whole life, lie there exposed before him. He can trace its constant course in guilt—from the first deceitful smile of Sin beneath that fatal tree in Eden, to the approaching death-shriek of millions united in one common ruin.

The last Sabbath but one !—(Gen. vii. 4.) Noah's sacrifice is consumed. There is not one other offered on earth! He has found grace, but his heart is rent with care and anguish. He is assured of his own safety, but he also knows that yet a few short days, and this living, breathing, palpitating world will be overwhelmed, the fire of life be

quenched in every vein, and mangled, decaying; putrid bodies be the only remaining evidence of this now florid existence. *God has revealed to him, that yet seven days, and he ends the strife with man.*

The ark is stocked with food, and now life begins to pour into it. From hills and plains, from earth and air, the prescribed number of creatures seek its shelter. What say the scoffers to this? Are they proof against this extraordinary evidence;—hostile beasts, subdued and tamed, pressing in general eagerness, peacefully within its doors; those birds from distant mountains; those creeping things; all successfully striving for admittance? Is there not in this conclusive evidence that they must be led by some great unseen hand? It cannot be instinct, or why so few? why paired;—the strong and the feeble; the hated and the loved; the timid and the ferocious; all in associate harmony? What can they be seeking refuge from? Wit has so long sported with the absurdity of this enormous Flood so long delayed; Noah has so long cried and entreated in vain; so long has pleasure mocked, and beauty scorned the dotard; the ark has become so stale a pleasantry, that greater prodigies than these would have failed. Few heed them; while those who do,

see nothing but Noah's madness having reached its meridian height. "He stocks his menagerie"—that is all. The day of grace is gone. Love woos no more. She hath taken her flight. All are dead to her except Noah and his. The others out-braved her, and "Wisdom, whom they scorned, will mock at their wild despair"—(*Prov. xxiv. 26.*) Noah ceases his warnings. There is now no time for repentance—for *the day of fate has come.*

Day has dawned. The smoke ascends from the sacrifice of Noah, who, prostrate before his altar, mingles tears and prayers with gratitude and praise. Eight human beings alone, among all the millions of earth, give honour to God on this His despised, polluted, stolen day! This Sabbath sun, now risen in cloudless glory, shall, in setting, behold the commencement of man's destruction. There is yet no hum of life. All is tranquil. Sin is devoid of fear. Iniquity lies slumbering like a child. Violence is hushed by sleep. Amid this calm, which, though not holy, makes all seem holy, Noah takes his last survey of objects so long familiar to his sight, and—he only feebly knew till now—so fondly loved! his last view, before that overwhelming Flood shall clasp all breathing life in its cold, resistless arms.

A few short hours, and, with coming night, all will be overturned, disfigured, crushed, destroyed. He found grace, but that only made him yearn that all mankind should find it too. He yearned during long, long years with hope; and now, he yearns with anguish in this last farewell of brothers, sisters, friends—the host in whose veins, as in his own, the blood of the lately-departed Methuselah is flowing; who have all scorned and spurned God's love and mercy, though He spared no effort in Love's behalf. "Farewell—ah, now too late—a dread farewell; none shall make known your misery—your struggles—your woes—your piercing shrieks—for he who hears and views, shall perish too."

The sun mounts high in heaven. The air is fragrant. A mighty floral nature breathes into it a most delicious perfume. All is smiling, fair, and gay; abounding with delight. "And this the day! Ah! ha, ha, ha! That fanatic has gone into his ark, where his madness has crowded all those creatures." The "maniac" is the object of universal scorn. But this is lost on him. God shuts him in; and now stands, in anger, face to face with a guilty world. There is nothing left to interpose; no imputed righteousness to turn aside His justice, to mitigate

or appease His wrath ; and yet the drivelling idiot, man, secure in his fancied wisdom, lifts his sinful hands in derision towards heaven's bright smiling arch, and, scoffing, shouts to his companion fools, "*Look ! see how it falls.*" Vain dupes of Satan. Alas ! the meanest insect within that ark is wisdom itself in comparison with you. The great Eternal has revealed to it a truth, that is now concealed from your wilful darkness ; it has been taught by the Divine intelligence. But hark ! shouts and music are floating in the air, filling it with joyous sounds, growing louder and louder every moment, as that great tide of human life and mirth flows onward towards the ark. What is this ? A dancing, laughing multitude, some already reeling with the fumes of wine, keeping measure, with lewd gestures, to their licentious song ; now pressing and thronging altogether ; now, to the animating tones of music, careering by couples over the verdant plain. It is the wedding procession of Noah's younger brother. To-day he holds his nuptials. Seated with his maiden bride in a flower-decked car, they form the nucleus of this brilliant, sparkling crowd. Rich indeed she is in radiant beauty. Oh, banished far is all but thoughts of joy and folly, as these playful,

whirling, excited couples toy and kiss in their rapid course ; throwing, as they pass, their sweet entwined flowers upon the bride, and pointing to the western skies. . . . There stands that huge ark—gloomy, gigantic, threatening ! Do they heed it ? Yes, for scoff and blasphemy, and to taunt the fools inside, amid the ringing laughter of the whole fanatic crowd of half-inebriate Bacchants ; while some, the lewdest of the rabble, menace that on the morrow they will smoke them out ; put an end to this flagrant insult to the common sense of the world ; and cure the idiots by the flames of their prodigious folly !

Hark—that peal ! Lo ! as they speak, the awful voice of heaven replies to this last insult of impiety. They did not observe or heed the coming of that murky cloud now passing over them. A few large, heavy drops are shed. But that is all. It has passed. The brilliant flashes play vivid and dazzling in the distance. The loud peals of the roaring thunders are still heard ; but these bring no conviction or alarm. It has passed. Their blood is heated ; their scoffing tongues give it voice anew ; and they hail, with vociferous shouts, *the great concluded Flood !*

IT IS THE FLOOD ! There was a tongue in every one of those heavy drops ; but man was deaf to its voice. Those thunders are the knell of all this florid, warm, and breathing life. One drop fell on the brow of that fair bride. It was the kiss of the Flood, her real destined husband, from whose strong embrace there will be no escape. He gave it, as his herald passed proclaiming the coming woe. And though his voice was lost in those mad ears, some hearts have heard it that have shuddered at the sound.

The sun is marching down the western skies. Great banks of murky threatening clouds are gathering there. But what of that ? The wise—and they are all the world—except perhaps some nervous timid sinner, who knows what it is to fear, but who gets no nearer to heaven by it—the wise—whom Sin enables to see everything so clearly—either do not heed them, or mock anew the lying absurdities of that poor dreamer, who now completes his insult to the world. They hold their weekly orgies. No thoughts of death disturb their carnival. Rain may fall—what then ? hath it never rained till now ? Live mirth and song ; blend wine with the voluptuous dance ; shout ; on

with the banquet and debauch ; pleasure is our god ; the senses rule ; shall appetite be vain ? Eat, drink, and revel ; the blood is all on fire ; the passions grow ; and passion holds the key of rapture's door ! Eat, drink, and revel ; earth hath no more but this ; and earth—earth is our home—we know no other place ; crown our joy with garlands—away with thoughts of toil, and care, and sorrow ; let the morrow bring what it will—but bliss to-day ; give wine to beauty ; put fresh fire in the eye, and fan the flame that burns our thrilling veins, with the cheek's heightened glow—with passion's languid sigh—(*Gen.* vii. 17—24). Hark ! . . . crashing—peal on peal—loud tearing thunder's most appalling roar ! And now it rains, as when the harvest summer clouds pour out their fulness. Flash crowds fast on flash ; the vivid lightning appals with its fierce devouring blaze, lighting up every moment the portals of earth's watery tomb. . . . Mirth, revelry, debauch, and every sinful joy, at once expire. Doubt has perished ! Horror sits enthroned ! Dread reigns with universal sway ! The ray of the eternal consciousness has penetrated every soul ! All living things have sought shelter : they found it quickly, or they have already perished.

The world bounds wildly with deep convulsive throes. The bed of ocean is upheaved. Destruction, ravening with fury, spreads over the face of earth. God does not sport with the dying agonies of creation. A demon might deride a drowning world : but Love Divine is here with Justice ; and for man—her offspring so beloved—rebellious—but yet her offspring, Mercy shortens pain. The Flood is poured with such resistless might, that nothing can struggle with its power. No existence can be prolonged by flight. The wing of the mightiest bird could not spread in that dense torrent : the mere weight of fluid seals instantly her doom, as, borne down, she falls into the foam where Death spares none. The beasts that sought their lair—that crowded into dens or caverns—can no more emerge ; the torrent stays them, until the roaring surge demands and takes its prey ; no sinewy limb can climb the hill or mountain side ; wherever it was, or sought shelter when burst the tempest, there it must perish. Intellect is powerless, save to augment the consciousness of pain. Energy is paralysed by those awful thunders—by that roaring tide that sweeps down every meaner edifice at its first touch—in whose fell clamour the shrill voice of

agony is stifled and unheard. . . . The reeling earth shakes the stateliest fabric into ruins. This fierce lightning that hands convulsed seek in vain to hide from sight—the crashing thunders—the raving howl of the tempest—the wild roar of the surging ocean—appal the bravest heart, and chill the warmest blood. There is *no* hope! What hope could live in presence of that elemental war; amid the sounds of its big voice of horror? Thousands die in the grasp of terror. Riven hearts cheat the waters of forfeit life, yielding only the senseless body to their hideous turmoil. Myriads each moment die. Every home has immured its own agony. No cry, or shriek, of the departing soul can pass its walls; the storm kills all but its own wild roar—and creation, a paralysed prey, sinks voiceless into the foaming tomb.

'Tis midnight! Earth hath not one edifice! Every trace of the labour of man is gone. A deep sea boils over the extended plains; it climbs the hill; it springs—it may not cease to rise until the loftiest mountain top shall be engorged. . . . The darts of heaven are quenched; the winds are hushed; there is no voice of thunder; the havoc is complete. The swelling sea will now rise without a wave, repressed by that incessant torrent which

nothing could withstand. There may be life in some dark mountain cave ; but there it must remain, even though hunger press it to madness, until the Flood arrive with its implacable mandate—and hunger, madness, and life together end.

The grim dark day appears. There safely floats the ark on that great waste of water. All the scorn of man hath ceased ; and Love, Eternal Love, has shown that they, and only they are safe, who are beloved.

CHAPTER VIII.

REFLECTION.—THE ONWARD MARCH OF SIN.

THAT scene, so transcendently awful ; has thy mind dwelt upon it ? Has it aroused thy sympathies ? Hast thou thought of that vast amount of human joy, arrested suddenly by the hand of God ? Hast thou invoked the aid of Imagination, and, assisted by her, felt its hopeless horror—its voiceless woe—its intense despair—its paralysing fear ; beheld youth and age, manhood and beauty, dashed, hurried to and fro among the surface ruins of a world by the huge force of those resistless torrents, appointed to sweep into destruction a condemned race ? They were thy fellow mortals ; they were all members of the same family with thyself ; possessed of the same sensibilities—the same feelings—the same passions, and, alas, partakers of the same sins ; heritors of the same penalties. It was nearly four thousand years ago ; but these, in the presence of the Eternal, are but as yesterday when it is past. And when, on

the bosom of that devastating Flood, thou hast beheld the precious ark containing Noah and his family float safely by, hast thou not marvelled that as men saw it rising into bulk year by year ; as they beheld it almost complete, while inspired lips continued to announce the approaching doom—ruin—destruction—death to all on earth, unless repentance, faith, and prayer should move insulted Heaven to revoke the dread decree—hast thou not marvelled, that all should have denied credence to the preacher, and refused the proffered mercy ? Hast thou not thought, that hadst thou been of the number, one at least among the sons of men would have listened to the earnest pleadings of Love, have become a child of God—united himself with Noah—shared his labour and his toil, obtained admittance with him, and been beloved and spared ? Yes ; thou hast wondered that the human race, only severed from Eden by fifteen hundred years, should have so resolutely effaced the image of God from their hearts, and become so deaf to the entreaties of Love.

Alas ! it is a marvellous property of the human mind, that as it contemplates the lives and characters of other men, every failing they exhibited is clearly reflected on its surface, while it remains uncon-

scious of all within its own dark depths. Is it not as when in our ramblings among the mountains, we behold some calm unruffled lake, whose pure bright sleep is unbroken even by one small ripple, its polished face revealing our every slightest motion ; and when we heedlessly cast upon it some paltry pebble, or some small grains of sand, showing instantly by the fast-spreading circles how sensitive it is to objects not its own ; while below there are monstrous rocks and stones to whose presence it is quite indifferent, and that cause not the slightest turmoil in its peaceful breast ? Yes—the human mind in much resembles such a lake. Other men's sins fall impressively upon it—the smallest moves it—it is alive to all—it can see the sad blindness of guilt—it starts at its mad daring—but it cannot turn its gaze within ; it remains ignorant of its own blindness as regards itself, and its insensibility to its own concealed sin.

It is true that those who perished in the Flood knew of Eden ; but they did not know that such sweeping punishments might fall on mankind. They, too, counted the years of life by hundreds, while so many tens bring us now to the hand of Death. They knew of Eden ; but dost thou not

also know of it? whilst thou knowest, too, of their sins, and the punishment they provoked. The lamb was to them a bloody type of One who should redeem their souls; but thou, more favoured, hast known the Antitype Himself on the blood-stained cross of Calvary. The voice of tradition might occasionally reveal to them the history of the past; but thou hast the imperishable record on the printed or written page, to which thou canst continually refer. Whatever they saw, thou seest. Eternal Love is exhibited to thine eyes ten thousand fold more brightly than she was to theirs—yet—what art thou? Suppose another deluge were raging—art thou within the ark? or doth thy yell ring over the foaming waters, as thou sinkest to thy doom?

Is it not well that we pause a moment and reflect. Most true it is, for God hath so promised, that no destroying waters shall ever again make of this world one universal deep. But dost thou not know, that all-consuming fire is as certainly appointed to be the next and final exhibition of Almighty wrath; nor can we tell but that tomorrow's rising sun may behold the flaming torrent enveloping the earth? There is no ark now building whose unfinished state can assure the certainty

of a further respite. Where then canst thou find one single pledge of safety? Whilst thou art next sipping that sinful joy of earth in which thy soul delights, may not the lip of the archangel have already touched the trumpet, at whose awful sounds the graves shall be opened, and the sleeping dust arise;—when thy fate will be fixed for ever;—the fiery flood perform its mission, purging the impure dross of guilt from out the earth—destroying every remnant of its corruption—and ending at once earthly time, and all things that are upon the earth?

Art thou more wise than were the victims of the Flood, who, drunk with the intoxicating fumes of sin, resolutely refused to believe in an approaching woe? Art thou preparing for that dread fire, which waits—certainly not far distant, and we know not how near; for earth hath sounds that to the ear of strong belief, are not unlike those of each driven nail in the last planks of the ark of Noah;—or does a damning incredulity obscure thy soul, and make thee to give the lie to the truth of God—trust in some fond delusion, and exclaim with them, “So long foretold, yet come not—drink—rejoice”?—(2 *Peter* iii. 3—13).

What though it be not imminent, hast thou not

the unfailing germ of death in every drop that is circling in thy veins? Behold thy flood—that will not less surely sweep thee from the earth, and consign thee, worthless dust, to the cold grave. Wilt thou be less a victim because there is no general ruin combined with thine?—because thou goest with hundreds, instead of with millions, into the presence of thy God? Remember—Love Divine, and only Love Divine, can rescue thee—not from the cold grave at which nature shudders with instinctive dread, but from that awful fiat of eternal death so infinitely more appalling; thus converting thy earthly ruin into an immortal triumph! Every hour that passes over thy head beholds thousands seized by the ruthless hand of Death; but even didst thou separately pass away, for thee the dread reality would be the same. Thou mayst see on many a little leaf an insect that there received its life, and that *must there* end it. Behold its world. Of what advantage is it to this insect, that the neighbouring woods contain millions of leaves as green, if its own—its all, should fade? Would not its fate be equally certain, as though some tempest had swept the forest, and united myriads with it in one common ruin? Whatever

may be the attending circumstances, death and judgment will come singly home to every individual bosom ; and in that dread moment, every human being must be absorbed by *his own* condition—his soul be occupied with *its own fate alone*. Wilt thou then longer defer thy preparation for this dread reality, because thou art not certain that the day of general judgment is near? Thou hast seen a parent or a child, a brother or a sister die ; and Death is ever lying in wait close to every human heart. Art thou young and beautiful? behold he is playing even now with thy bright hair. Art thou strong and bold? he haunts constantly thy footsteps. Is age approaching? oh! his arm is round thee—thou art continually feeling its pressure ; and he awaits but the permitted moment to give thee a final embrace. Redeeming Love alone can make that embrace a blessing. Keep her with thee. Under her ægis thou art safe for ever. But if she be absent, death portends an eternal woe.

Forty days.—(*Gen.* vii. 17.)—The waters have covered the tops of the highest mountains, and now the torrent ceases. The sun is unveiled ; and oh, what joy this brings to the inhabitants of the ark. Throughout that windless rain, it has remained

almost quiescent. But now, a gentle air begins to send the ripples on their ceaseless chase, and it moves majestically along the liquid plain.

Five Months.—(*Gen.* vii. 24.)—The ark has touched ground ; it rests upon the summit of a mountain. To feel this is indeed a blessing. Not that doubt had ever invaded those beings so mercifully preserved. Throughout the darkest of those rain-gloomed days, Love's light was ever powerful within the ark, where a continuous miracle of life-sustaining power was displayed ; but to be freed from that receding flood, to be once again on solid ground, quickens the pulsations of every heart, and fills every soul with joy.

Twelve Months.—(*Gen.* viii.)—and some days, and all are commanded to quit the ark. The sacrifice offered by Noah, his prayers, his thanksgiving, and his praise are acceptable to God. He obtains a gracious promise that no destroying rain shall ever again be poured upon the earth, but that her seasons shall be constant, that man may sow, and reap, and eat in peace. Nor is this all. All that earth contains is now placed at his command. What was reserved before is now freely bestowed, and shall be no more a cause of sin. "Every

moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things." But God expressly forbids that man shall shed the blood of his fellow man ; "for in the image of God made He man." Notwithstanding his fall—notwithstanding his inclination to sin, some of God's glory rests upon his noble head, and his life is sacred. Divine Love condescends further to man's weakness, and appoints her beauteous bow in heaven as a sign and token that, while earth endures, no aqueous flood shall again destroy life.—(*Gen.* ix. 1—17).

There is a marvellous indulgence in these dealings of God with rebellious fallen man. They contain what may be called a continual progression of love. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ;" "therefore I will not again any more curse the ground for man's sake, neither will I again smite every living thing." But man may doubt this ; and when a cloud comes over the earth may fear a repetition of that dreadful scene. "Therefore will I set my bow in the clouds as token of an everlasting covenant ; I will look upon it and will remember it." God, who made all things, demands obedience. Let this great truth be

believed, and we should seek in vain a plan more wise, more good—so tender, so benevolent, so just as His. The Eternal Spirit appears to be continually stooping to his criminal weakness. Man never shows such love and pity to his fellow-man; his vanity and pride are inflexible; he rears his standard, and woe to him who rebels. But God, who now orders the world to be re-peopled, takes a survey of the past—reviews the lusts and daring sins that roused His anger, in order that He may modify where man stumbled and rebelled. Not that what was first ordained was imperfect—but that Love is boundless. It had become evident that to deny him the possession of anything the earth contained was a snare. He is determined to possess all. God therefore grants him all things. There shall not only be no forbidden tree, but no forbidden flesh. Pride and vanity were powerful in creating unbelief before the Flood. Men mocked at Adam. His happy state in Eden, of which he spake, became a reputed fiction—a mere senseless dream, or an old dotard's foolish lies. It was clear that a *single testimony* had not sufficient weight and power with man. God therefore spares *eight* persons to certify the fact of the Flood, the con-

tinued belief in which ought to exercise great influence in the future. Eight living witnesses of millions having perished in a Flood that submerged a world, the ruin of which had been previously declared. And therefore the ark. Love desired not only to win those rebel hearts, but also to restrain a re-peopled world from similar iniquity and unbelief. She gave time for repentance. She combined in this an appeal to the present and to the future ; to those threatened with destruction, and to the progeny of those who should be saved. She beheld that Sin possessed such power to deceive the heart of Man, that he would give credence to any absurd fable rather than to God. It seemed certain that unless the destruction of the world by the Flood, for special reasons, had been long previously made known as the fixed intention, the settled purpose of the Almighty ; and that, had He conducted Noah, unknowing why, and all other life He had determined to spare to some high mountain top, whence they should view the flood, whose progress, when all other living things had been destroyed, would be arrested before it reached that place of refuge—very few years would pass before the vaunted wisdom of men would be occupied in proving that the Deluge

was not poured out by God, but by some mighty power hostile to Him—His antagonist and rival; that Noah's preservation, and that of his family was owing to his own superior intelligence; that the beasts flocked there by instinct or by accident; that anything in fact would have been admitted, rather than the truth of the act, and the interposition of God. Love will not allow this temptation to lie in man's path. God therefore declared His intention 130 years before. He iterated and reiterated it by the voice of Noah! He continued to proclaim it through the advancing work of the ark. It was thus clearly established that to predict, to preserve, and to destroy, were all His own; so that none might presume, while the record should endure, to challenge His foreknowledge, His power, or His love. This would not of course prevent Science from attempting to prove that there never was such a flood at all. But, while the fact of the flood should be admitted, the agency could not be denied. Men might cease to worship; but by such accumulated evidence they are placed by God in this position: that if they will not sacrifice to Him—if they will not look by faith on a promised Saviour, Love's great redemption, who shall wash away their sin, and open

to them the bright realms of glory—if they will serve devils and dishonour Love—the guilt shall be their own, even as theirs will be the penalty ; confusion in time, and sorrow through eternity.

The human race increases rapidly since the Flood, and with numbers comes rebellion. Love beholds that one only speech aids pride in its resolves. She therefore mercifully varies their language, so that, ceasing to understand one another's speech, their daring combination ends in discord—(*Gen. xi. 4—7.*) They abandon the edifice which soaring pride had designed ; desert their intended monster city, and divide and roam in all directions, thus spreading population over the face of the earth.

Four hundred years only have passed, and God is almost forgotten. Men will not have God to be who and as He is, but what and as their vain imaginations choose to have Him be. Many a spot is already deeply dyed with the darkest shades of guilt. Sun, moon, stars, fire—mere creatures of God, ministers to man, are set up by sin in man, as rivals of their Creator. They are worshipped, and He is neglected. Men subject themselves to the very vilest folly, rather than to Him ;

and, under the influence of these delusions, they become pitiless to one another. The whole brood of murder is rampant in man's heart: he becomes possessed with an insatiate thirst of blood, which is made to minister to the most infamous passions. No considerations now deter him from anything he has strength to compass. God will not again destroy the race; but men, so corrupted by sin, will, through the bitterness of their black heart, punish one another for their guilt, and spread destruction furiously through each other's lands. Some, though, alas! but very few, continue to worship God. Some *must be* faithful; for since God revealed to Adam the plan of Redeeming Love, He hath never left Himself without a witness on the earth.

Separate nations have arisen. Cities are kingdoms; and power strives for empire. Behold, the time has come at which Divine Love will appoint a special line for the advent of the Saviour of mankind.

CHAPTER IX.

CALL OF ABRAHAM—LOVE'S GREAT PROMISE—ABRAHAM'S
OBEDIENCE.

ONE-THIRD of earth's assigned existence is complete, and *another* now commences, as *prelude* to the last. In Noah, there was merely a continuance of Adam's mission to people the earth. But in Abram, the Tempter, Satan, the chief of the hosts of Sin, the great enemy of the earth, is subdued. The Saviour, the only hope of man, will come in the line of Abram. Love hath made her election. She will take human birth through a Virgin's womb; and shine with her glorious light upon a darkened world. In the house of Terah, a chief one in the progeny of Shem the eldest son of Noah, Abram his son seems to be the only person not tinged with idolatry. Love will make of him the earthly progenitor of the King of Kings. The promise is made to him at Ur in Chaldea. But there is more than a promise. According to God's invariable rule

there is a command attached to it. There must be faith and obedience, or Love will not bestow her precious gifts—(*Gen.* xi. 31, *Gen.* xii. 1—3). And Abram both believes and obeys. The journey is a long, difficult, and perhaps dangerous one. The father seems to have determined to accompany his son, but he was a clog upon him, for “they came to Haran, and *dwelt* there.” Abram appears to have deeply loved his father, but God severs them. If we could all hear the commands of God respecting the course we are to take, and see as He sees the impediments to our progress, we should perhaps find the loving secret of many of the painful dispensations of God’s Providence in the removal of dear and cherished objects from this world—from our eyes, if not from our hearts. Abram and Lot journey in safety. They are protected and blessed. Compelled to seek food in Egypt, this is made to them a source of wealth. Abram worships God, and walks in the path God has marked out for him : he serves, and obeys ; faith in him, and Love with him, making him the object of her especial care. When the heart believes and loves, the stream of heavenly bounty often flows richly round man’s feet, caressing them at his every step.

God will ever try His children ; but if their hearts be true, how lavishly He rewards them. Wealth and power were bestowed on Abram, for they were necessary to the position Love had assigned him ; and he becomes the conqueror of mighty kings who had despoiled and captured his nephew Lot. And so we shall ever find, poor wretched creatures that we are, if we can but place an unswerving trust in the Divine Love, she will certainly give us cause of gratitude and praise. Our souls will receive from her that peaceful calm she only can bestow ; and certain that we have her aid, and must be victorious, the heart will be so endued with her strength, that it need not fear, however mighty the forces arrayed against it.

But now Abram stumbles. Although God has repeated His promise, and Abram's wealth has become enormous, no child has yet been born to him. He does not doubt : but still *there is no child*, to commence that promised abundant seed. Sarai, believing it to be quite impossible she can now bear, gives him her maid Hagar in order to solve the difficulty. The result is obtained ; but domestic discord makes it hateful to Sarai, and very painful to Abram.—(*Gen. xvi. 1—6*).

How often, alas ! impatience thus thrusts itself between frail man and the blessings God has in store for him, plunging him into sorrow by his employment of means never intended by God to bring his joy. The project it may be flourishes ; but God sows his chastisements about the root, giving perhaps Dead Sea apples as the produce, and postponing yet further some future good intended for His erring child. God requires not only mental faith, but its practical evidence in obedience, patience, action, and a predominant governing feeling that God cannot want our aid to effect His purpose, and to realise His projects. If we keep within the limit of His commands and leave the rest to Him, we are safe. Sarai's maid, was human reason advancing to the assistance of Heaven, showing when and where the light should shine, to clear up the darkness of ten years' delay. It was poor finite discovering a path for the Infinite. And the wisdom of God will not thus be taught by the folly of man's presumption. Eternal Wisdom that wills an event, has fixed the mode and the time ; and if man attempts to usurp the attributes of God, he almost invariably smarts for it, although his action may be sinless, save in the determining for God where the blessing should

begin. Affliction often brings the temptation to this fault, and we need when subject to it, to be especially on our guard. If we feel that the troubled waters are thus rolling round us because of sin, the Love of God is pouring illumination into our souls, as though we saw His glory passing by us on Mount Horeb. Our duty is then clear, however difficult it may seem to be. That duty is to wait with un-murmuring resignation until the sorrow be vanquished by His supreme command. If we seek to anticipate this period by the employment of any means of doubtful propriety, the result may be a woe tenfold greater than that we have been so impatient to remove. He who sends an affliction in mercy, will bless the simplest means when He sees fit that it shall end ; and if in the dark heavy hour, soft whispered blessings seem to be breathed upon the soul, they are the voice of Love—an evidence that she is with us, and is preparing what we may hasten by loving faith, and trusting supplication, even when fear may be pointing to a combination arrayed against us, that it might seem impossible to overcome.

Another year might have brought the wished-for and promised child, had faith sought for it patiently

with prayer. But now God grants them their desire, adding to it as a first penalty fourteen years of further barrenness. He makes the blessing wait, nor does he even renew in all those years His promise. He sees that Abraham regards Ishmael as the promised issue, and is dreaming of his offspring's future grandeur. Faith is powerful in Abraham, who believes this son to be the appointed heir. But God breathes upon the baseless fabric, and it falls in stately ruin. Sarah shall conceive ; and hers is the promised issue—(*Gen.* xviii. 15—21). It sounds exceedingly strange, but it is received with faith. Abraham pleads for Ishmael, and obtains blessings for him ; but Sarah's is the glorious seed. And it is worthy of especial remark, that although God promises in this issue nations, kings, numbers, power, wealth, and territory, He now seems to withhold the greater promise of that wondrous mystery of redemption, Christ the Lord, the whole earth's blessing, which God had before said should spring from him. The penalty of his error is still working, and God has in reserve for him a trial of his faith as regards that very thing in which he stumbled, wherein he is required to prove, by victory over what would seem to be the most reasonable doubt, that human weak-

ness no longer pretends to dictate, or offer aid, to Heaven.

But faith and obedience are not left without present reward. That great and wondrous future Sacrifice appears in human form, and eats with Abraham. He comes in love to him, but as consuming flame to a neighbouring iniquity. He fills the heart of the believer with joy, while dooming the impenitent to destruction. The cry of Sodom's grievous guilt had roused the slumbering wrath of outraged Heaven. Although only 500 years have yet passed since that awful Flood, there is sin so deep and dark as to repel the hand of Love, and forbid the longer sleep of justice. Man so fully believes the promise connected with that beauteous arch in heaven, that, made bold by a fancied impunity, the extremest wantonness of iniquity abuses God's indulgent providence, and heaps up the measure of that wealthy plain. Yet mark how indulgently Love listens to the pleading believer, who asks for Divine mercy to be shown, if fifty, forty, twenty, ten, be there, who are not partakers in the guilt—(*Gen.* xviii. 23—33)—and how mighty the influence of a few true servants of God may be, in averting from guilty nations the punishments of Heaven.

But alas ! not five are found there to whom the righteousness of Christ can be imputed—and Lot alone is saved. God will not be outraged and insulted with impunity because He has enthroned Love in heaven, and is ever ready to show mercy to them that seek it.

Is it not peculiarly calculated to fill the heart with awe, that in the first recorded instance of our blessed Saviour taking human form on earth, and thus appearing to human eyes, He came to judge the towns of that polluted plain, and visited their unmitigated guilt with an all-consuming fire from heaven ? that thus again He comes in glory as Judge in that tremendous day, when heaven shall flee from His presence amid the wailing of self-condemned souls, to plunge this world in one vast purging flame, ending its sin and guilt for ever ? But let us hope there was no other foreshadowing of the great final day, recorded in that account of the destruction of those cities. Lot—how small a proportion he bore to the inhabitants of those cities ; among myriads, one ! Three saved—and how many consumed ? Oh, forbid it, forbid it, Love ! fill every human heart—draw to thee every human soul—diffuse thy mighty power through all the

world, that the multitudes may be on thy right hand—and few, oh, few, be left to perish! For it cannot be doubted it was Love's design to show in those transactions an ensample of the eternal plan; condescending to bend again to man's unbelief, and give an evidence of the nature of that future destruction that shall fall upon the earth;—speaking thus to the immortal mind by the aid of mortal sense;—*if the fire of Heaven descend on one plain because of sin, why should not flame for sin consume a world?* *

Isaac is born, and the aged mother laughs with joy. It would be difficult to conceive the delight of a parent so advanced in years, as the infant draws his nurture from her long hopeless breast. He grows; he is weaned. And now comes a bitter smart for Abraham. Ishmael is very dear to him; Ishmael for so many years his only child; the first whose little eyes had beamed in his. But Sarah never had any part in his pleasure. From the moment she had given Hagar to Abraham, she

* The conception of Sarah, which is the commencement of the first coming of Christ, and the destruction of Sodom, which is a type of the end of his work of earthly redemption, at his last great advent, took place at the same time.

envied the mother ; and she abhorred the boy ; so that his fourteen years' content were a continuous chastisement to her. Now his turn has come, and she transfers her sufferings to him. Strong in her maternal pride, her sovereignty, her jealousy, and the fulness of her hate, she determines that her long pent up bitterness shall have a violent relief—mother, son, and husband, all at once feeling her power. She begins her rule as a princess ; and as such, issues her commands, " Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son—with Isaac."—(*Gen.* xxi. 1—11.)

Thus human passions work out the Divine will. Thus error enfolds its punishment. The lad has grown around his father's heart ; this expulsion seems too a gross cruelty and injustice to both mother and son, and there is a strong conflict in the patriarch's soul ; for he loves Sarah—and Isaac, the heir of promise, his great crowning joy. But God is commencing here that great trial of faith He has reserved for Abraham, and confirms Sarah's decree, promising to make a great nation of this son of Hagar, for the father's sake.

How sweetly Love smiles here as chastisement falls. Abraham is not left subject to any torturing

doubt as regards the exile's fate, for God hath assured him it shall be a great and prosperous one. The signs of Heaven's high purpose now appear. The child of promise, may not live with the child of sin : belief and mistrust may not dwell together. The patriarch rises at early morn, when the groans and tears of parental passion may be heard and seen by none, and with heavy sorrow of heart sends the mother and child away. What God demands of us is, not a heart of stone, but obedience. The deep feeling, the pain and sorrow of Abraham, are natural ; and holy, not being allowed to influence his decision. He yields, and weeps ; *alone*, for Hagar and Ishmael are gone—(*Gen.* xxi. 12—14).

How far beyond the reach of human imagination are the workings of Eternal Wisdom in the affairs of men ! We perceive in Ishmael's banishment the chastisement of Abraham through a woman's vengeance. The future of God's chosen race is also shadowed forth. The child of nature is sent from the child of grace ; belief is separated from sin as a prelude to God's blessings, that no confusion may reign amid His work, or presumptuous doubt claim with faith the promised portion. But this is far from being all. The seeds of future trial are sown

in this present sorrow. These marvellous interlacings of men's fate, these preparations of the future in the present, show the wisdom and power of God. It was necessary to God's purpose in the great trial of Abraham's faith, that Isaac should become the sole idol of his father's heart, that all the passions so keenly felt in that severance from Ishmael, should now centre in Isaac—the heir of promise—henceforth his only child—the channel of all hope—his only joy—that cherished son. There must be nothing human left for him to rest upon should any evil happen to this loved one; Ishmael must be dead as regards all hope in or through him, and the entire love of his heart be Isaac's. And this is a preparation for a trial twenty years distant. How inconceivable, then, by mortal faculties this great mysterious mind of Providence! And ought not the record of its glories presented to our favoured eyes on the holy page, to bring our every purpose under the influence of that wisdom which alone is really, truly wise?

Those twenty years—not one moment in the eternal thought—move along with their measured pace, maturing the preparation of God's work. The father's love hath gone on constantly increasing, until it absorbs and engrosses all the affections of

his heart ; and now the hour of trial sounds, and the awe-struck ears of the doting parent tingle at the awful mandate, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, and offer him up for a burnt offering," &c.—(*Gen.* xxii. 2). The attempt to find in language a power to exhibit the mental torture of this aged saint would be absurd, and again I draw the veil over the face of a grief too sacred as well as too heavy to be depicted. But will he go ? Will he not rather think that what seems so repugnant to the character of God, who has commanded that human blood shall not be shed, cannot be intended to be obeyed ? Faith has grown with love in the heart and soul of Abraham. He has learned to confide so entirely in that Infinite Wisdom which has throughout regulated his affairs, that though his heart-strings break, he will obey. What was the exile of Ishmael compared with the task he has now to perform—to slay and burn that beloved idol of his affections, that centre of all his hopes ? He does not seem to have uttered one word of remonstrance ; not even to have said, "But thou hast promised that in him should be a great and mighty nation." The conviction that God would in His own way perform all that He has promised, seems to have obtained entire possession

of his mind. This is faith, in its full and unmixed sway. He prepares immediately for the execution of God's command. But he is not insensible to the mighty influence that the human affections may bring to bear against even the firmest purpose. He therefore rises early in the morning—(*Gen. xxii. 4.*)—and steals unheard away, lest the keen sight of a fond mother should perceive the secret of his woe. He dare not try her faith with so ponderous a load as his own is called upon to support—for did it fail, how should his purpose hold? No, it will be time enough to subject her to the torture when he shall have to place beneath her eyes a small heap of ashes—the sole remains of her perished joy and pride. Until then at least, she shall rest in blessed ignorance and peace, totally unconscious of the impending pain.

“The command is so express, there can be no hope—yet, God had said—but who shall attempt to penetrate His mind, or to control His will!” To the eye of faith, the child is therefore already dead. He hath really no longer a son, for God has claimed him; and he himself must slay;—must apply the fire;—must view consumed that beloved form, the idol of his aged eyes. There can be no doubt that

like every true child of God, as he reviews memory's record of his past life in this sad journey, he beholds but too much that must be displeasing to a pure and holy God—never perhaps before shown to him by conscience—and renews his sorrow for all his sin. But be the cause what it will—to hear, and to obey, and not to question, is the soul of faith. “Offer him up a burnt offering.” These were God's words. As he draws near to the end of his journey, and has the fatal mountain in view, his faith seems to rise with the approaching extremity, and all unwittingly the spirit of prophecy descends upon him : “Behold the fire and the wood ; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering ?” “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”—(*Gen. xxii.*). These are indeed blessed words of faith ; “God will provide.” If we could always utter them from the depths of our hearts, not as a momentary exertion of faith, but as a constant and unfluctuating conviction, how happy would be our course on earth in the presence, or even in the embrace of the most painful difficulties. The sense of duty and the power of faith is strong indeed in both father and son. The latter, in all the vigour and power of early manhood, against which his aged parent would find it impossible

successfully to contend, voluntarily submits himself to the preparation for his own slaughter ; to be bound, as now he is, and placed upon the wood intended to feed the fire that shall consume him. Behold the arm of the father outstretched ; the hand prepared to inflict the fatal wound.

But the angel of the Lord, Love, the great future Sacrifice of Calvary, prevents this consummation. A voice from heaven stays the uplifted hand. Abraham being in the very act to slay, the command of God is as entirely accomplished as when He himself decrees a thing. His all-piercing eye beholds that there is no wavering of purpose mixed with Abraham's grief, but a determined, unswerving will to execute the command he has received. Since the will of God was made known to him, no hesitation has been born of his suffering. He hears the mandate with a thrilling awe, but purposes so firmly, that even were life's current really pouring from the veins, it were not more accomplished. And now God fulfils his prophecy ; a ram caught in the thicket—(*Gen. xxii. 13*)—takes the place of the released son ! What rapture swells the father's bosom ! All his smothered affections may now resume their sway and burst the fetters of their throbbing tomb—

that heart so convulsed in their repression.' Three days—three long, long days—and Isaac, to the eye of faith, was as truly dead as if already consumed ; and now, restored to life, he stands victorious at his side. With joy beyond all expression of joy, he holds in his fond arms this slaughtered son ; raised by God, and given to his heart again from the dead, because his obedience had fulfilled the trying word : a double type of that great sacrifice to be offered on this mountain — perhaps on that very spot — and there, in the immediate vicinity, to rise again from the dead.

CHAPTER X.

ABRAHAM'S REWARD.—THE DAWN OF SALVATION'S DAY.

ABRAHAM is amply repaid for his belief and obedience even should this mighty effort of faith and duty receive no further reward. Dear though Isaac had long been to him, all past affection seems but faint and poor to that with which his wildly throbbing heart now overflows as he holds him in his embrace with the firm assurance that he has him back never more to be separated from him till Death shall stop life's circling current in his now aged veins. Rich—rich clouds of incense from his soul mount to heaven with the smoke of that sacrifice.

But God is ever profuse in bounty. Although supreme in all things, and entitled to command, He always liberally rewards duty in His children. It is beyond all question that if we believe firmly in His overruling providence ; and, in the extremity of our deepest earthly sorrows, that it is a wise, although

inscrutable decree that subjects us to them, His Almighty hand will change the grief to joy ; and perhaps add such increase of felicity as shall provoke the deepest emotions of gratitude and praise. There is nothing we ought more to pray for than this faith ; that we may be enabled continually to look up with confidence to the Divine Love ; to bow with unerring resignation to the Eternal Will ; to confess the justice and the mercy of His chastisements ; to humble our haughty spirits in the dust before Him ; and to trust Him, where our feeble sight prevents our perceiving Him. For if we can do this, we shall feel His arm around us in our very darkest hour ; and be able to rejoice in the consciousness of His presence, when we should otherwise be utterly overwhelmed.

Yet God gives a greater reward to Abraham. Not only is his son restored with all that added joy of the wild rapturous play of affections, long restrained, but now revelling in their increased and unchecked might—but, having passed spotless through the trial, God demands no more. In that moment when he was about to shed the blood more precious than his own life, the love of Heaven shone gloriously around him ; and the

ram consumed, the voice of God sends, with the assurance of an oath, a full renewal of that great, great promise, so long withheld from his believing ears—(*Gen. xxii. 16.*) *It is now declared to be fixed irrevocably, that in Isaac's seed, the Saviour of the world shall appear on earth!* The faith that hath passed through such fierce probation, so fiery a trial, may repose at last, free from all further peril. God will never subject him again to the anguish of such obedience, in which every natural tie dear to the human heart must passively be severed and resigned, in order to evince his unswerving trust in the Eternal Love. There is to be no other Ishmael sent to the desert—no Isaac's blood to be poured out on the altar; but now that the victory is won, life may flow sweetly, tranquil, softly on, with all its ripened joys, until life shall end, and earth be exchanged for heaven.

O happy Patriarch, Saint, and Father! when thou didst climb so wearily that mountain, with those leaden feet of heavy care, and that heart, too, beating with such thick, painful, agonizing throbs, although thou wert immoveable in that obedience from which thou hadst never swerved, how little didst thou think that thou shouldst

with joy never felt or known till now, descend with lightsome steps, thy son aiding thee with his youthful vigour, and with loving smiles assuring thy heedlessness ! Little, oh, little didst thou deem, when he ascended, bearing on his shoulder the wood on which his body was to be slain—a type of what 2,000 years prepares—that full of life he would descend ; that thou shouldst be able to talk with thy attending servants of a happy sacrifice ; and that, instead of having to blast his fond mother’s eyes with some few ashes held before her in thy trembling hand, thou shouldst bring him back to her in rosy health, and give him to her fond embrace ; recount with grateful heart and with ecstatic voice the incidents of that dreadful trial ; and watch her, trembling as she hears, press closer and closer still that treasure she had unwittingly so nearly lost for ever.

Thou art, O happy Patriarch, elect of Heaven, the especial care of Love. As a father, thou art assured that a countless people, and prophets, priests, and kings, shall spring from thee. As a saint, Divine Love has unveiled thine eyes, and made visible to thee the mysteries of man’s redemption ; the blessed Saviour himself has declared

to thee that in thy chosen race will He be born—that holy thing, through whom all pardon comes, mighty to heal the sin-brought woes of a lost and ruined world. My spirit joins thee on thy homeward journey, and shares thy transports on that blissful day. I watch how ardently thine eyes are fixed on that dear object of paternal love, on whom erewhile thou didst scarcely dare to look, fearing that faith might perish in the blaze of thy great affection, which, harmless now, may freely spread its delicious glow through all thy being. My spirit dwells, too, with thy spirit on that wondrous theme, the immeasurable project of Redeeming Love, to give a solid trust to ruined man, and lift his glorious dust to her highest joys ; corruption all destroyed, and eternal light become the source of his beauty and his felicity. For when those words of promise dried on thy cheeks the grateful sparkling tears of love, the power was given to thee from on high, by a special illumination of thy soul, to behold that future. Adopted by oath into Heaven's majestic scheme of mercy, thine eyes beheld the cross on which the God, made man, expires ; and viewed the dust of the Redeemed rise in eternal glory. Hath not Love well rewarded thy faith in her ? Does not

her diadem indeed adorn thy brow? Children like the stars of heaven, the sand on the sea-shore ; and of them—filling the earth, the universe, with splendour—Love, Eternal Love made visible—the Divine revealed in human birth !

Abraham may indeed be said to have been the supremely blest among the children of men. The first faint gleam, the first pale moment of salvation's day was shown to his eyes. It dates from him. When first he was chosen—called—set apart—obtained grace—received the promise—was known by name—that day *commenced*, in whose glorious *noontide hour* man's ransom should be paid, and whose *midnight moment* shall invade the million million graves of earth, disclosing to her shrinking eyes the final doom. Abraham is thus the key by which prophecy may be opened, and the light of this great hidden truth shine upon the searching mind. There is a clear stream of truth flowing from the eternal fount of knowledge, that runs through the record God has given to us. There Love unveils her beauties to the humble soul. Had I not found her *there*, she would never have made her treasures mine ; I should not have known of her bright eternal youth ; she would

never have revealed her charms as now to my favoured eyes, or shown me those glorious visions that I now behold. When man, that blessed creature, fresh from the Almighty hand, surrendered to Sin, and lost his high estate, he learned, even while God's judgments were ringing in his ears, of redemption through Eve's future seed—(*Gen.* iii. 15). But this was a general promise to the race that should spring from his loins. To people the earth was still his mission, although he *must* now *die*. Love would not that the anger of God should plunge the rebel into the extreme fearful depths of dark despair, no hope to support and no mercy to cheer him. Her sweet hand upheld his trembling frame, while the great promise was given to his soul, that through faith he might return to God, and overcome the fatal influence of his subtle foe. The demon taint spread fast and deep over the blighted earth, but that first sinner clung closely to the side of Mercy. Sustained by Love, he could dare the monster's utmost malice, because faith poured floods of glory into his grave.

Yes, floods of glory! I appeal to you who have been taught by faith to know your Lord, and to feel that He is *yours*; you whom grace divine hath

brought to the cross, to cast there your load of sin, and made able to count all as loss in comparison with Him who died to save you ; you who feel that, redeemed, ye are children—sons and heirs of God, appointed to kingdoms purchased for you with His precious atoning blood ; and who have an occasional foretaste of those joys that await you where God hath only one aspect, that of love—I ask you whether you have not been able to regard the loathed and dreaded tomb as a mere little avenue of darkness to the shrinking dust alone, while the soul beholds eternal light breaking through in floods so intense, as to fill her with a rapture that bursts the chains of terror binding her through the senses with which she is allied ? Is it not true, I ask, that, held firmly by the hand of Love, looking with the strong piercing eye of faith, and released thus from its corruptible dread, she regards that chilling night unmoved by fear, because she sees and knows that beyond it there is an endless day, and joy that never dies ? Alas ! we know but too well she cannot often enjoy this heavenly rapture. Associated as she is, she loves her visible material organization, and sympathizes with her partner of clay, so that when this turns and shrinks back with

fear, she participates in the agony, until Love seizes her again with her ardent grasp, and brings back to her that blessed truth which makes her so humbly bold. But with Abraham the time had arrived for dividing the great scheme of salvation from the mere increase of the human race; the time had come for choosing and separating a family in which the precious faith should never be extinguished—a special seed, a vehicle of grace, where all mankind might trace the progression of the glorious plan, when Love should in process of time descend from her realms of bliss, and, clothed in human flesh, strike a fatal blow at the empire of Sin.

In Abraham, the elect of Love, her preparations began. When first he set his foot on the soil of Canaan, her glowing hand traced the circle of redemption. Its glorious centre she fixed at Bethlehem, when the choir of seraphs should proclaim and welcome the advent of Love on earth. She made Abraham on the borders of Canaan one extreme of its diameter, placing at its opposite that fearful day of mundane doom, when his dust shall rise from its grave at Mamre. But none may tell *the exact time* for that dreadful, yet grand, glorious, and enrapturing scene, save Him from whom earth's time

sprang, when the heavenly host welcomed the new-made world to its place among the glories of the sky. God hath not, however, forbidden that we should endeavour, if with awe and reverence, to draw near to what seems to be His secret mind, and with our feeble powers attempt to discover the period of that inevitable destiny of man. It is placed before us on the page of Revelation. It there claims our thought, standing, as it undoubtedly does, mysteriously revealed, and only needing the ungiven key. That key, I have already said, seems to me to be Abraham, whose life looks like an epitome of his epoch—the day of salvation, the circle of redemption. Abraham left Haran for Canaan at 75 years of age; at about 125 years (fifty years after) he offered up Isaac; at the age of 175 (fifty years later) he died. And with the deepest humility and reverence I venture to suggest that if the number of years from Abraham's 75th year, to the Crucifixion of our Saviour be truly found, the time of the second and mighty coming of the Lord of Glory may be determined, as nearly as God will allow it to be known, by reckoning a similar number of years from the Crucifixion. It is not, however, necessary to salvation that man

should know when Sin and Death are to be destroyed ; for whether that event come quickly, or whether it tarry, his appointed time is not long on earth ; and when the hour of his dissolution arrives, then doth eternity begin for him individually.

But there is a mighty thrilling influence upon the mind, when it conceives the possibility that but a few short years may intervene between *this busy hour* and *that dread day*, when all the pride and pomp of earth shall perish, as completely as form is destroyed in some shivered glass ; that infants now being born may view, untouched by death, that day of doom ; may hear the archangel's summons with their living ears ; may behold the bonds of death broken by the glorious dead ; and know, by their *living sense*, their own future of supreme unimagined bliss, or of unutterable woe.

The soul cannot escape from the fascination of this idea. And it ought to turn the mind to heavenly things. For if the finger of Love do but touch us at that dread moment, all its terrors will vanish in immortal power. It is Love's hand alone that can annihilate the dread, whether in those whom the summons finds alive, or in those

who quit the grave. Love will shed her own matchless beauty—that dazzling glow which gives the bliss of heaven to the enraptured soul—over every redeemed sinner, over every favoured child of God.

But, clogged and hampered as we now are, how utterly inadequate, O Love Divine, are mortal powers when they attempt even a faint reflection of thy glories ! How imperfect, alas ! has been this effort to trace the course of thy constant bounties to thy beloved creature, man ; for, notwithstanding his folly, his weakness, his unbelief, his most stubborn will, thou hast never faltered in thy loving care. Yet I have followed thee, feebly though it be, from thy effulgent throne in heaven, ere yet this world was prepared for man, to the top of Mount Moriah ; where thou didst, with thy sweetest accents, restrain the hand and rejoice the heart of faith ; preserving his son to an earthly father, on that same spot where in the fulness of time God shall yield *thee* in human flesh, His own first-begotten, into the world, to pain, and shame, and a most hideous death. And if thy glorious name, that demands bright characters of heavenly light, hath only faintly gleamed beneath this feeble hand,

showing thee but indistinctly and as in a dream, grant me, O Love, thou power Divine, inscrutable, a greater portion of thy strength as I press onward in thy glorious footprints, that I may display thy blaze on Calvary. And, as thou hast all power over the human heart, oh, let not thy blessed name appear even on this dim page in vain. Our eyes behold not the fire on the electric chain, yet can no hand touch it without a sudden thrill. Thus may it be, O Love, with all who look upon thee here. Give them faith to touch *thee*; make thy power known and felt in every heart; then shall this thine unworthy servant obtain the priceless honour of being as a conductor, Love Divine, to them from thee.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE'S BOUNTY.—ISRAEL'S PREPARATION.

LOVE is the possessor of unbounded wealth. She has so much of it to bestow, that her hand can pour a Pactolus over every human soul, running its precious waters through even the smallest crevice, to deposit there some portion of those treasures of its golden tide that possess the unrivalled qualities of increasing with every increase of desire for them in the heart, and of being imperishable as the eternal fire itself. If the soul of man will but confess that state of awful poverty to which it has been reduced by the plundering hands of Sin, she flings around its shoulders robes, oh, how more gorgeous than those that earthly monarchs wear! But if it will insist, spoiled and ruined though it be, that it is still rich and great, she leaves it in its nakedness and rags. Love will bestow all, or nothing. She will not allow her gold brocade to be combined with man's own mean and dirty shreds. She demands a

full surrender of the human heart. Do you think of giving her a portion of it only, and reserving the rest for yourself, the world, and sin? You may as well expect to catch with a sieve the rich drops of the fertilizing summer rain. But give it all to her, and she will fill it with the brightness of her own unrivalled beauty! Who would continue poor, when he may achieve unbounded wealth? Who would hug the squalid garments of wretchedness, and reject for them the sumptuous robes of regal state? Who would absurdly thrust forth the useless sieve of his own fancied worth, when brilliant floods of glory are ready to be poured into him, if he will cast away that wretched, deluding trust? And yet such is man. The loathsome poverty into which sin has plunged him has in his ruined eyes the semblance of an enchanting splendour; his ragged soul is satisfied with its disgusting squalor; and thus deluded and deceived, wealth, state, beauty, glory, while rolling past him, are viewed without desire, and lost without a pang, or at the most induce him to hold out his despicable sieve. The gross follies that characterize the human race have become a proverb among men. Everybody can perceive those of which his neighbour is guilty, however blind

he may be to his own. But there is one folly, and that, alas ! the greatest of all, in which the vast majority of mankind unmistakably agree—viz., that Love Divine has no charms in their eyes to render her worthy of their especial notice. And why is this ? It can only be because they have never sought her, never obtained a near and clear view of her. The paltriest earthly bubble, be it what it may, is certain to attract them ; its rainbow hues take their eyes captive, and they gaze upon it with rapture and delight, forgetting in their pleasure, their excitement and exultation, whence it derived its existence ; until at last it bursts, as it is sure to do sooner or later, and they perceive it was but a drop of sullied water, now lying in the dust at their feet, its fancied worth and its cheating charms gone at once and for ever. And while they are thus entranced by earth's fugitive and worthless bubbles, Love—sublime and eternal, the soul of heaven, the grand conservator of time, who holds in her delicious hands the incomparably precious gift of immortal bliss, which she is ready to bestow on all who receive her into their hearts, at that dread day when the grasp of ruin shall displode and destroy the things of this world—Love, that can

never bend, or fade, or die—is unable to obtain from them the smallest of their regards.

It is a strange, mysterious, and lamentable truth, that man, although most mutable as regards all other things, never changes in this phrenetic folly ; what is near him, however paltry and worthless it may be, is all potent in its fascinations with him. Anything that holds out to him the promise of an immediate, though only a momentary pleasure, wields an almost irresistible influence over him. Sin, through some of his mysterious agents, is always about him, busily blowing his own dust into his eyes, and thus cheating him and fooling him with the most transparent delusions. He is made to see mortality standing ready to clutch him by the throat ; all future considerations perish in the mad desire for some certain immediate enjoyment, and he seizes, however vile it may be, whatever glows at and thrusts itself upon him. Oh, madmen, idiots, that we are, not to perceive that we are but wretched tools of the great Prince of Evil. What though in consequence of Adam's fatal error man is mortal now. God made him something more than this, and he may regain all that he has lost, and obtain immeasurably more, if he will but accept the

aid of faith ; cleanse his eyes from that dust with which Sin so busily fills them, and behold sweet Love inviting him to immortality ! Surely this would be worth the having, if only as an escape from extinction ; how much more so, then, when it is a deliverance from those everlasting pains, whatever their nature may be, which avenge the slighted offers of Redeeming Love !

And his madness, folly, and abject slavery are even more to be deplored, when they not only lead him through the grave to that future of woe, where life, light, and glory are lost for ever, if Love shall have been persistently rejected ; but, that by not passing through what may indeed well be called her renewing birth, he never obtains a perfect knowledge of the joys that even this world can afford. The soul expands beneath her vigorous touch, and becomes endued with new strength and beauty. She alone, by whose almighty influence all things were made, can adequately reveal the mysterious treasures they enfold. She can point to ten thousand winning charms that man without her aid can never know ; for the bright book of nature cannot be correctly read until she pours her light upon its mystic words, when charm succeeds to charm, and beauties all unthought of burst upon the view.

Nor is there anything in this that ought to cause in us the least surprise. Look at that fair young maiden, who has become entangled and ensnared with the soft meshes of human love. She holds within her delicate little hands a flower, not of any rare species or extraordinary perfection, but on the contrary a flower of which we know there are hundreds growing near her favourite haunts, and which nevertheless, seems to captivate all her senses, and inundate her with an extraordinary and surpassing joy. It would appear as if possessed of wondrous fragrance, and yet we know *that* is not a charm in which such flowers excel. Bees surely have been hiving their luscious treasures there, her sweet lip dwells on it so fondly and so often, returning and returning as if it contained an all-exhaustless store. Is there some strange beauty lying deeply hidden in its chalice, that her beaming eye gazes so intently there ; or what has it, that her rose-tipped fingers should thus be gently dipping and playing among its tender petals ? What can there be that—ha !—she places it—behold the mystery revealed, behold the key to this wondrous secret ! she tasted it, touched it, saw, and smelt it, *in her heart !* It was love that imparted to it its sweetness and its

perfume, that endued it with its softness and its beauty. It was the charms love had added to its natural ones that thus enabled it to afford her such exquisite delight.

And even as human love enriched that flower, by the added tenderness and passion of the maiden's heart, so Love Divine, when once really enthroned within the soul, enriches and beautifies all the visible creation. Through her the stars are rich in harmony; the streamlet's babbling tongue, the warbling bird, the flower, all cry "Rejoice." For are they not all the work of Eternal Love? And when she is in the soul, they become the property of the soul, a present from her bounteous hand. And the great enchantment that we find in them is not that we had before experienced, when they delighted because the love of nature was powerful within the heart. We become endued with another, a mightier, and added sense; a something born in heaven; a gift from supernal realms, sent expressly to us. It is this which now receives impression from such objects, and conveys from the meanest things rich songs of adoration and of joy to God. It is no longer only because they are beautiful to look upon, exquisite to hear, to touch, to smell, to taste, to know; but that

in some new sense they are *our own*. We cast our glance abroad, as Adam did when first he viewed the visible creation fresh from the Divine hand; and of all existence, looking up to Love, we say, "*For me.*" We feel that there is no beauty, charm, or joy in heaven or earth, but that received its wondrous being for our pleasure and our delight. Science and knowledge, the most exalted and profound, might have occupied themselves with those petals, and discoursed learnedly about them, but would never have discovered what won that sweet maiden's rosy lip, and kept it so fondly lingering on them. Vanity and pride are, alas! but too generally the attendants of knowledge and science, while the enamoured maiden saw only the iridescent hand of Love. So it is in all our intercourse with nature. If what we love is nature only, we may enjoy her charms, but we become possessors of only a feeble portion of them. While self reigns pre-eminent in the lost and ruined heart of man, there are transcendent mysteries that exist in vain for him. Creation may be said to be locked up. Love only keeps the key of it. Yes, Love, thou, and thou alone, canst open and reveal them to our enchanted eyes. Thou comest to us; we receive

thee ; thy vast designs show through the opening door. What ! can that be man ? Those creatures that we really scorned ; that we regarded with such foul disdain, for they were of so mean and low a birth, and were so vilely clad, so repulsively surrounded ; and those, whom we looked upon with such sweet complacent pride, who so much interested us and charmed us, as the possessors of riches, rank, and power, adorned and embellished by all their mighty influence can procure ;—are these beings, so dissimilar, really so near akin ? The pride and the scorn, have they both left us ? They could not endure that heavenly light ; they have vanished ; they are gone ; departed, to return no more, because they are succeeded by an ardent love, that embraces them *all* at once in its capacious view, as indiscriminately heirs of the same boundless and eternal joys ; by a fear, that holy fear, the tender child of Love, that, shuddering, beholds them, rich and poor, mean and noble, strong and feeble, all alike crowding heedless and careless on the very brink of horrors that may well appal the stoutest heart. With what eager anxiety the soul now regards them ! All hatred, if it ever existed, is dead within her. The sense of injury, of injustice, and of

wrong, that had before perhaps nearly stung her into madness, is now hushed to sleep ; and though the most deadly envenomed darts may have been hurled at us, thrust into us, with proud indifference, or with fiendish subtilty, the soul hath only one desire—that what most hath wronged us may escape the peril, and obtain the joy. And why ? “ We sinned—and Love forgave.” Now then for the first time we see that the world is really peopled. We are filled with Love’s own exquisite and eternal sympathies. We behold the image of God resting on every individual of the human family, whatever his condition or his colour, though pride may travesty and sin may disgrace the heavenly resemblance. We view these, all excited, struggling, fighting, in their untiring search of, and anxiety and eagerness to possess, a few vile grains of sand, while gems of dazzling splendour are really thrust by Love before them to invite their grasp, and are thus exhibited in vain, although the abundance is so great, so exhaustless, that all—all—and countless million millions more might be enriched, and leave their wealth undiminished and unimpaired. And we would have their eyes opened. We would have the ennobling truth revealed to their darkened and

diseased hearts, as it has been to our own ; that sand may appear to them but as sand, that the gem may be discerned to be indeed a gem, and that all may be candidates for those sparkling coronets, that Love, Love Eternal, will bestow.

Wealth hath now new charms. It is felt to have been bestowed on man as the steward of heaven ; and that, as the Apostle justly says, "it is required that the steward be found faithful." As Love Divine spreads her endearments round the soul, they produce an ardent thirst for power to aid and bless our fellows in the flesh ; that this love, this sovereign remedy for every woe, may be brought to the knowledge and appreciation of all mankind ; that the hand of helping pity may dry the too plenteous tears of human sorrow, while the wounded spirit is at the same time directed to the source of all true consolation, and the heart invited to feel it was the hand of mercy caused the grief, that the light of Love might be admitted to shine through its dark and dreary labyrinths. Objects are no more viewed with the distorting organs of a corrupted nature. Love brings back its original purity to our sight. Things appear what and as they really are. Wealth may be prized, but chief among its attractions will

be, that in the carrying out of His great plan, God employs human means, making man His agent with his fellow-men. Creation, in its every aspect, in its every beauty, moves us powerfully by its charm ; but it is for man—for the original Lord of that creation—for the beings whom God, when they were pure and innocent, invested with the sovereignty, that the spirit pants and burns. Everything else is but subservient and accessory it is in them ; the precious pearl, the special emanation from God, resides—that which is destined to eternal life, or endless death, when earthly existence shall be lost in the dark grave. And in this the soul follows in the bright track of Love. Her sole, her constant employment, since man was chased from Eden, has been to lift him to a future and imperishable joy ; while a stream of earthly bounties from her rich and liberal hand is continually flowing around him, and gleams of celestial sunshine are shed upon his path.

Salvation's glorious day has commenced ; but before the bright sun of its morning can arrive to shine upon this sin-bound earth, there are long hours of darkness and gloom to be endured. Love reveals this. She shows that, just as in the natural day, there is more than one step from midnight to

the appearance of that glow which beautifies the horizon and makes the world rejoice. This precious day of man's salvation is all her own, her gift to wretched man ; *and she appoints and rules it in every moment of its development and progress.* That chosen family, from the loins of faithful Abraham, which she has determined to make the vehicle of grace, and has elected to her glory, is not to follow the ordinary course of nations—house, village, city, realm ; few, strong, beaten, victorious, mighty. No ; during the progress of those hours of obscurity, and while yet only one small family, it is to disappear. In a secure, though painful retreat, hidden and oppressed, yet, in spite of every effort to prevent it that brutal power could devise, constantly and rapidly augmenting in numbers, it is to remain ; until, at rosy dawn, God himself shall unfold its standard, and, with His mighty outstretched arm, give unmistakable evidence that the power is from Him, from Love, alone.

I have said that Love reveals this special ordination as regards her elect and chosen race. When Abraham smote the kings—(*Gen. xiv. 14, 15*)—he became naturally anxious as to some combination being formed against him for avenging the

late defeat ; and fear seems to have succeeded this anxiety. But God, whose presence as a God of Love ever brings assurance of safety, appeared to him in the mysterious visions of the night, and repeated the promise that he should be the father of multitudes, and that all the land of Canaan should become a possession of his family. Abraham was emboldened to ask a sign from God in confirmation of this promise—(*Gen.* xv. 8)—“And he said, Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it ?” By command certain beasts and birds were killed ; the beasts were severed in the midst, and the portions, with the birds, touching each other, formed a circle on the ground. These Abraham watched, driving away the birds of prey, until the sun was about going down. Sleep then fell upon the patriarch. It was not a gentle slumber creeping over his senses and closing his watchful eyes, but a deep, heavy, preternatural sleep ; a total severance from the living world, and from all bodily sensation. Held in its adamantine grasp, his spirit became a separate nervous existence ; and there grew around it a hideous pitchy darkness, whose touch came with such excess of torture upon the shrinking soul, that the horror of the dream was an all-pervading,

piercing, grasping gloom—a struggle as with a demon in a foul and loathsome grave, where not one ray of light could penetrate. And lo! the Voice Eternal reveals the fate of his issue—(*Gen.* xv. 13, 14)—bondage and slavery; then freedom, plenty, gold, and vengeance on the oppressor. Then came what may be called the seal of God upon the contract—a fiery tongue of awful brilliance, and a smoking flame, passed between the pieces by which he was surrounded.

It is to be a race under God's own especial command and direction; a race by whom He *will* be loved or feared. It has already been amply proven among the general mass of mankind, that the undefined and distant future alone—the eternal existence after death—does not wield a power sufficiently effective to act as a counter-charm to that seductive Sin, whose deadly evil is always gilded over by some immediate gratification to the soul he has corrupted, and to the senses that he has depraved; and even that death, so blended with the offence as to succeed consecutive and immediate, is inadequate to restrain. Time has shown that man in the perversity of his nature will bestow honour on beings the spawn of his own deceived and besotted

imagination, and on objects formed by Divine beneficence for his use and service ; that he will yield homage, fame, praise, and worship to things that he may, or fancies that he may, grasp and compass by some of his senses ; to things that may be commended to him by some vile fraud, or by some darling lust ; and attribute power and might to these, or to his own wisdom, or to some monstrous shame—to anything in fact rather than to God, whom he seems determined to dethrone. Behold the heart of Love ! God will exhibit His power for and with one peculiar people. It shall never be absent from their sight. He will command, direct, announce, foretell, in such manner that they shall never be able to attribute success to themselves alone, nor believe that it proceeds from some wretched idol ; nor even when, as the fruit of their error and disobedience, shame and disaster fall upon them, say that it is chance ; but know that both success and failure are from Him. He will himself give righteous laws for their government. He will clearly explain His will. Blessings shall abound with them while they continue faithful ; but He will smite them, and crush their every joy, whenever they rebel, and transfer their alle

giance to some device of man's great enemy. No mystery shall envelop Him. They shall know by their outward senses that He is present among them; know continually whence they derive strength, joy, power, and blessings, and from whence proceed their sorrow, feebleness, and woe.

Were it not for the perverseness of sin-governed human nature, it might be asked with confidence, whether there could exist a being who, in the stupidity of his conceit, unmoved by love, and too dull for holy fear, would venture to tax the Eternal Mind with injustice; to accuse Love of abandoning the rest of the world, in thus appointing one peculiar people as the recipients and conduits of heavenly grace, leaving all others to steep their hearts in every vile desire, and plunge their souls into the darkest abysses of the basest idolatry, until they should, by their monstrous excesses, call down upon them the Divine vengeance. But ignorance has had this presumption. And, should there now be one who dares to imagine that there could exist one blot, however small, in Love's great, wondrous scheme of Man's redemption, let him remember not only that the potter's hand disposeth of his clay according to his will, but also that the great overwhelming flood

that devastated the earth spared only one small family ; that, from those eight persons, all the multitudes that should people the earth must necessarily have sprung ; and, therefore, that though the nations of the world should debase themselves, it could not be that they were ignorant of God, and of His almighty power. But the historian of Love need not thus stand upon the defensive. It is his boldly to assert, that even reason, dévoid of faith, must find, if it be rightly exercised, that this clear, continuous evidence thus given to man, was like some glorious sun to light his path, to show him whence he had strayed, and to bring him again into the abandoned, yet well-known track that heaven had marked out for him. It must perceive that every blessing on His elect, thus traced directly to His hand, displayed the appointed road to *all* ; that each new chastisement for sin was as a blazing beacon warning from His frown ; that every plague on grasping Egypt, was a proclamation to an erring world ; to the intent that a concentrated evidence might be perpetuated through all time, and furnish a continuous record of Love's mighty, generous plan, after its completion should have obliterated the power of a dispersed yet imperishable race ; and spread among

every nation, kindred, and tongue, the knowledge of the mystery of redemption, the sublime achievement of Eternal Love.

Would the extent of ancient human power have been better understood, had that great work of Cheops, his pyramids' huge mass of stone, formed twenty different structures in twenty different lands? Oh, it is Satan who thus beguiles the ruined mind of man, who never can judge his Maker with equity and truth, until he view Him by the clear, pure light of Love. Then wisdom and mercy charm him by the exhibition of a perfect whole ; the product of a combination of equally faultless parts.

Thus Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw by the eye of faith. Preserved by God, their substance and wealth rapidly increased. Not so their numbers. They had not been commanded to people the earth. It was their lot to wander with their flocks and herds, never building or establishing themselves, until that dread vision should be in course of fulfilment. They were only 70 persons after 200 years —(*Gen.* xlv. 26, 27). These were all that had to seek refuge in Egypt from the famine. Jacob's fears had turned to joy. Esau had forgiven the deceit by which he had robbed him of his birthright,

and they had met in peace at the grave of their father Isaac—(*Gen.* xxxv. 29). Joseph, mourned as dead by his doting parent, was, under God's overruling providence, preparing for his family, first succour, and then bondage, in a land where they were to remain until the destined hour of a great deliverance. God protected them; yet they were not free from sins and errors, or exempt from chastisement for them. But God alone was worshipped. The craftiness of Jacob had brought him many a piercing wound; yet he had greatly prospered. When his life should end, would not his numerous and wilful progeny divide and separate? God sends first a marvellous abundance in the land of Egypt, where Joseph stores up his corn. He then brings famine. Canaan is bare—Egypt abounds. When food is sought there, the long-lost son is discovered, and the venerable Jacob, soon after to die, obtains, through Joseph's influence, a grant of the land of Goshen for his family. How reasonably and admirably did Love thus provide against the two most probable errors—separation and declension. They are now a race of herdsmen among a people who worship an ox-god, Apis; and who, consequently, abhorring their pursuits, and looking upon

them as an abomination, would never unite with them. This will prevent their being scattered through the land ; will preserve them from a dangerous contact with idolatry, and will keep them all together until their deliverance. Meanwhile, a continuous blessing will make them a multitude, so that they may go forth a nation. Love's hand erects a barrier between them and the prevailing sin ; and, while disgraced by their calling, they are protected and detained in consequence of their usefulness and their rapidly accumulating wealth.

CHAPTER XII.

DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL—PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

WHAT mean those huge gigantic tongues of flame? what is that furious fire on Mount Horeb?—(*Ex. iii.*) Moses is filled with wonder. His eyes are so attracted by that intense, fierce, preternatural blaze, that, although they are wounded by its great power, he cannot avert them. The loud, devastating noise of its boisterous tongues, fills every labouring pore with the moisture of extreme terror; yet he cannot withdraw; he must gaze; he must approach. It is such a flame as no earthly substance should be able to withstand; iron might flow like water if exposed to it; and, lo, even the smallest spray, the most tender delicate twig, remains unconsumed amid all the seeming fury of its rage. Fearing, yet constrained by desire to contemplate so marvellous a spectacle, he is drawing toward it, when a small still voice absorbs in a moment the furious roaring of the flame: "Moses—Moses." The astonished shepherd, who answers to

his name, is cautioned not to approach that living fire lest he should be consumed ; and hides his face in terror while God proclaims himself as there present—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob —(*Ex.* iii. 1—6).

Love has heard the bitter cries of her people. The voice of their suffering has reached her throne. She has beheld their cruel oppression ; she has known their bitter grief ; and God has come down, determined to end their sorrow. Egypt shall no longer oppose their increase, oppress them with burdens, or detain them in her territory. They are to be delivered, and led into the land of Canaan ; a land of joy, flowing with milk and honey—a land of great abundance. Moses is commissioned to Pharaoh, but pleads his weakness, until God rebukes his unwilling fear. “ Who is it bestows power upon the tongue of man ? Is it not I who created him ? Thy voice and that of Aaron shall make known my words. It is my breath of flame that shall issue from your lips, and ye shall become the terror of that proud land of Egypt ”—(*Ex.* iii. iv.)

Behold, now, the sweet dawn of salvation's day !
Its first bright streak of light is on the horizon.
Love is busy with her chosen race, that she may

cleanse their brow from the vile stain of slavery. That race is the *Vase* that shall contain her precious perfume, until the hour of God's appointment so long foretold. That *Vase* no earthly arm shall have power to destroy, until she herself remove the treasured fragrance from it. It may be shaken, battered, bruised—but not broken or shivered, while the marvel of Redeeming Love is hidden there ; but, that departed, it may be consigned to ruin, and strew with its shattered fragments an astonished world.

Israel hears with joy of the promised rescue. But an increase of persecution quenches her bright smiles with the big drops of sorrow. In vain the inspired lips of Moses proclaim the Lord, and speak to them of the great Jehovah. Their spirits are in anguish. They shrink from him. Their bondage galls them, and they vent their rage and grief in keen reproaches—(*Ex. v.*) They have none of the faith of Abraham. Theirs is so feeble, that it fades and dies immediately it is touched by grief.

But when any hour appointed by God arrives, who shall resist His will? Moses proclaims the Almighty in the ears of the great Pharaoh, who demands some miracle in token of God's message.

The Heaven-taught envoy casts his rod upon the ground, and it springs, a serpent, from the earth —(*Ex.* vii. to xii.) The magi are allowed to imitate the miracle, but Aaron's rod consumes all they produce. Behold him now approach that famous Nile, the fearful rod in his uplifted hand. Pharaoh denies the boon he seeks; Aaron smites, and lo! blood is all that stream has now to give. It contains no drop of water for thirsty Egypt; blood alone flows through all its course; it becomes defiled by putrid fish; millions upon millions of frogs swarm from it over the country; they spread abroad like the shifting sands upon the desert. Pharaoh calls for mercy, and the power that created, destroys the frogs; but Pharaoh, resuming his impenitence, the dust of Egypt becomes a noxious life, and the filthy vermin cover man and beast. Protecting angels encompass the land of Goshen, while corrupting flies swarm over loathing and loathsome Egypt. The cattle are cut off by murrain. Sheep, horses, asses, camels, are all visited by the same disease. The sprinkled ashes of the furnace spread boils and blains among the suffering and terror-stricken people; but Pharaoh will not yield, even though more awful calamities

are threatened. Thunder, with a voice unheard since that night of flood, a blinding lightning and a dreadful hail, make havoc over the land. The monarch quails, and his momentary repentance is accepted ; but the tempest withdrawn, he recalls immediately his solemn pledge. "They shall not go." The locusts now consume what the storm had spared. Not one blade of grass, one leaf, one speck of verdure, one particle of living green, remains in Egypt. The smitten country groans under the destruction, and beseeches the sovereign to avoid the snare. A darkness that may be felt, a darkness rife with terror, fear, and dread, holds Egypt fast bound for three whole days in its embrace of gloom ; none left his couch, or ate or drank, and yet the houses of Goshen were full of light. Love was there, as in the ark with Noah. The hearts of Pharaoh's subjects sicken beneath these thickly-crowding woes. But the hardened monarch, in his impious pride and folly, deems every plague to be the last that God *can* send. He places limits to Omnipotence, and therefore flings anew his defiance to Heaven so soon as each terror is removed. Such is the fatuity of impenitence. It thinks by feigned submission and obduracy of

purpose, to counteract the Eternal Mind. But when thus abandoned by Love to the darkness of inveterate unbelief, man ever acts as if he were totally bereft of reason ; and even the proudest intellect loses its guiding light and falls to ruin, where it would have found all clear and plain had it not been duped by sin into rebellion. Thus, although Moses, whose every threat had been completely fulfilled, and to whom credence was therefore due, declares the approaching and simultaneous death of every firstborn throughout Egypt, whether of man or beast, pride will not escape the danger by submission. But the children of Israel prepare for their journey ; and the terrified Egyptians, who regard Moses with the deepest awe, are only too ready to lend their gold and jewels for facilitating the departure of such dangerous guests. Egypt, enriched by their slavery, by their long confiscated labour, is thus made to disgorge a portion of its unholy spoils. The Paschal Lamb, that glorious type of protecting Love, is slain. Its sprinkled blood is an ægis under which all abide in safety, though vengeance, unimpeded, is elsewhere removing myriads from life and light to the darkness of an unblest tomb. It is midnight. The flaming

sword is smiting down all its victims. Universal Egypt shrieks. The mighty cry of woe is upheaved by millions. A nation is yelling in its agony ; for in one brief moment, in every house, its pride, the first-born, is a lifeless corpse—(*Ex.* xii. 29, 30).

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Not one foot or hoof belonging to Israel, now remains on the soil of Egypt. The people are literally thrust forth, and with such extremity of haste, that they bear with them, too, all the wealth they have borrowed. God, Love, goes before them in cloud and fire. They have thus the visible evidences of Divine protection, as these mysterious symbols direct and guide them across the Desert. Their shortest route would have led them through the territory of the Philistines. But the grim face of war might so fill their hearts with terror, that they would perforce return rather than affront it. For the spirit of man is soiled and consumed by the vile degrading bonds of slavery, and their corroding rust. A captive who has been long confined in the gloom of a dungeon, may not safely be at once brought forth into the full, precious light of day. Its brightness might prove too powerful for eyes that have

become enfeebled by continuous darkness ; and the power of vision be lost for ever in those crystal globes. The Italian fowler has learned this secret, and uses his knowledge not to preserve, but to destroy. To prepare his most valuable call-bird, who is to be employed in luring his foolish fellows within his toils, he keeps him awhile in an obscurity graduated into the most profound, unbroken darkness. Under this system, the pupil of the eye dilates with the increasing gloom, and still further in the darkness ; then, suddenly, without any interval of more moderate light, the bird is placed in the glorious blaze of noontide, in the time of summer's fiercest sun. That cruel shock destroys the enfeebled nerve ; the bird becomes totally blind. In this state he is said to use more winning arts than he would otherwise employ. No wild plaint for freedom gushes from his throat ; but he solicits in the most tender tones, companionship and friends !

Israel is encamped on the shores of the Red Sea. The guiding cloud stops, and the people move no more until it shall be again in motion. But Egypt, having buried her dead, has recovered from her panic and her fear. Her full tide of impenitent unbelief has returned. She is sorry for having yielded

—(*Ex. xiv. 4-6*). She believes *that* really must have been God's last possible exercise of power ; and regretting her slaves and her wealth gone together, she burns for vengeance. Hot with eager haste, the infuriate king draws together his armed hosts and pursues them. Revenge, slaughter, lust, the thirst of spoil, all urge them on. Rapine and murder ride in their swiftest chariots, and all the sufferings of Egypt are to be atoned for in blood, and woe, and tears. The Divine hand, so mighty in the rich land of Egypt, will be powerless among the sands of the desert ; and Slaughter may cram its greedy maw to complete satiety !—(*Ex. xiv. 5-9*).

The shades of evening have not yet gathered round the encampment, and clouds of dust in the distance reveal to the tortured eyes of the timid Israelites that they are pursued. But what of that? Have they not the cloud and flame denoting the presence and protection of Him, who has already so greatly humbled the pride of Egypt for their sakes? No matter ; this is a new danger ; the mighty symbols of protection are unheeded ; the people explode immediately in cries and tears ! Alas ! all experience teaches how vain it is to hope, that where the crushing yoke of slavery has long been borne, the day of

freedom will be as bright and clear at its opening as when its sun has mounted high in heaven, and all the obscuring mists of the horizon have disappeared. They behold the sea before them ; the dreaded sword of the pursuers behind them. There is no freeman's love of freedom in their soul, inspiring and nerving them to action. Their spirit has participated in their body's slavery. In presence of this danger they bewail their broken chains, and unrestrained by faith *in* God, or fear *of* God, they hurl their reproaches at the chiefs they lately idolized. "Were there no graves in Egypt, that we were brought to die in the wilderness?"—(*Ex.* xiv. 11, 12). The awful fear of death is upon them ; and their exclamation is that it is a blessed lot to live a slave, rather than to die !

Until the soul of man becomes really imbued with the spirit of freedom, man is but a part of what God has made him to be. The brilliant charms of freedom are exhibited to his eyes in vain ; he cannot perceive or appreciate them. Rather than dare suffering to win her glorious smile, he will crouch low beneath the most base and degrading oppression. But he whose earliest gaze was fixed on liberty, admits no earthly rival in his soul. His

eye hath drank in her heart-enchancing light, and can never know satiety ; he cannot bear the faintest shade of darkness ; his limbs have bathed in her pure invigorating flood ; she has infused her spirit in his veins ; she has become a portion of his ardent soul ; and her bewitching image reigns paramount, supreme, resistless, in his heart. "Live without thee !" he exclaims, with all the concentrated powers of his existence in full activity—"live without thee ! rather let the sands of life be spilt at once by the rude hand of death ; rather the sea again pour its devastating floods over all the earth, and mankind perish ; or the heavens hurl down their blazing suns and nature's self expire ! There is no life without thee ! When once thou hast bestowed the precious light of thy endearing smiles, there is nothing that can cheat, divert, or withdraw the heart from thy ennobling love, for earth hath nothing with which to compensate thy loss. To live with thee, is life—there is *none* other ; what is so called, when subject to oppression's chain, is paltry, mean, and worthless ; gold and gems can never hide the hateful links from him who has once drank at thy clear fountain. Life without thee is death—enduring, sentient death !"

If the freeborn spirit thus revels in its sense of exemption from the power of any human despotism ; thus soars in its noble aspirations ; would thus view the world as worthless, life as despicable, and spurn them both, rather than that the chain of slavery should cross its proud and noble breast ; what may not be the ecstatic rapture of that soul which is enabled to burst and fling aside the bonds of hell ! Released from that vilest of all slavery, that willing subjection to the hosts of sin, she feels that her real existence is only then commencing. Till then the longest life she dared to contemplate, seemed limited to some three or four score circles round yon blazing sun. But now, her bonds removed, she soars, and fills her eyes with that vast conquest, an endless, blissful, inconceivable eternity ! Will she not spurn the yoke to which she before submitted ? Will she not deplore she had not earlier known that ennobling freedom ? The "perfect law of liberty" reveals to her its powers, its enchantments, its raptures, and she kneels in the full blaze of her celestial joys. She could no longer live without the faith whose beams thus fill her with transporting light ; and though myriad Pharaohs may follow after, to again enslave her, and thus make all her

earthly future a continuous struggle, she will contend vigorously with them all, to defend her precious conquest.

But though faith is absent, and the love of freedom is not yet born; though they sinfully forget how that dreaded enemy has already suffered at the hand of God, yet they cry to Him—(*Ex. xiv.*, 10)—in their despair—and even at this poor acknowledgment Love is ready to give them help. The sea divides in presence of the uplifted rod. The pillar of cloud removes behind them, shrouding them from the Egyptian foe, and deepening to him the gloom of night; while the pillar of fire, advancing before them, gives them brightness, and leads them on to safety. The upheaved sea, restrained by the almighty power of Love, stands in towering walls of solid crystal on either side of the passing host; and Israel, with their flocks and herds, pass on dry ground, over what was lately the hidden bed of those now congealed waves.

But for that fatuity of sin which has been before alluded to, it would seem impossible that this new and stupendous miracle—showing that the power of God was there also, and still with those it had delivered—should not have deterred Pharaoh and

his host from further pursuit. It is possible that this invitation to repentance was not given to those who had already received so many dreadful lessons ; that the supernatural darkness, caused by the cloud that protected the rear of the Israelites, prevented their knowing when they quitted the desert for the dry bed of the divided sea. Be this as it may, the monarch, inflamed by pride, revenge, and lust, goaded by sin to seek his impending fate, bounded with his bloodhound army across the fatal strand. Israel has passed completely over. And now, with coming day, God *looks through* the cloud—(*Ex.* xiv. 24, &c.) He troubles the myriads that have swarmed between those crystal walls. His storms descend on their devoted heads ; His thunders roar upon them ; His terrific lightnings run slaughtering among them, and He pours down His rain in torrents. Now they would fain retrace their steps. “The Lord fights for Israel !” they cry. But this knowledge comes too late. Wisdom, whom they slighted, mocks at their despair ; their chariots lose their wheels, confusion reigns throughout the host—they remember it was thus He ravaged the plains of Egypt ! The cloud no more conceals them. There, in safety, stand the Israelites—their late despised slaves, their later promised victims—looking at

their dreadful trouble, at their struggles to escape with life. Now the hour of vengeance has indeed arrived; God commands that the rod be again stretched forth. Hark!—the thunders are no longer in the heavens, but pealing and rolling through the bosom of the commoved earth. Dark terror's icy hand chills every soul—there is no moment's pause to relieve them of the hideous fear—louder and louder roar those subterranean peals; the rapid, violent undulations of the ground appal every heart. The Israelites fall prostrate in admiring terror—the proud array of Egypt has become a whirling stricken crowd—another crash!—earth reels!—how feeble her previous motions, sickening though they were, when compared with this, in which God breaks the sparkling bands of ocean, and crumbles down her crystal walls. Hark to that cry of agony; as through each breach a massy hideous wave, gigantic rolls! A few short moments—those waves have seized their prey! They sweep away that threatening host like grains of sand—raise them, infuriate, for an instant, a crushed and bleeding mass upon their foaming crest, then overwhelm them in their mighty bosom, roaring over them with dread discordant exultation, and heaving their crashing flood-like waves on the affrighted shore.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAINING IN THE DESERT—SINS AND JUDGMENTS—
DEATH OF MOSES.

AND that was done before the eyes of Israel! Can these marvels ever be forgotten by this people? Can the belief with which they now inspire them ever be lost? For this hour at least they are under their mighty influence; and, as the foaming waves heave upon the crowded strand those mangled bodies, which show the utter ruin of that late rampant pride, they bow their hearts as well as knees, and worship Him who could thus deliver—
(*Ex. xv.*)

They believe. But the faith they feel is only the fruit of fear. They have no loving trust in Him who saved them. The unregenerate heart in every period of time has foul examples on that truthful page of Holy Writ. The unpalatable waters of Marah—(*Ex. xv. 23*)—fill their hearts with rebellious murmurs, which their tongues are not

slow to express ; and yet—only three little days have passed since that wondrous manifestation of Divine power ! A few days more, and they are loudly clamorous for bread—(*Ex.* xvi. 2, 3)—they deplore with rage and tears the abundant slavery from which they have been removed ; their hearts are no more wrung by the memory of their slaughtered offspring ; their stripes, their cruel bondage, the murder of their children—oh, they had rather all this, if accompanied with abundance of flesh and bread ! And is it not ever thus with man ? For each small sacrifice that God requires the lusting soul turns rebel on His hands ; and in presence of some delight of earth, eternal freedom fades altogether from his view—(*Ex.* xvi. 4—15). They obtain food. It is supplied by a miracle renewed with every successive day, in order to keep alive their faith by a constant dependence and unfailing sufficiency. And yet, when they need water at Rephidim—(*Ex.* xvii. 1—6)—they do not pray, but again they clamour—they upbraid—they forget anew their tears, and cries, and bitter groans under that tyranny of Egypt ; they are not satisfied to wait at any time for God's help ; He ought *to anticipate* their every desire ;

and their cry is, "Why were we brought here to die of thirst?"

But Love is indeed patient! This journey of Israel exhibits the eternal warmth with which she glows; it shows that where she has chosen she can never fail; but that, waiting and watching, bewailing the ungrateful injuries she receives, still giving, ever indulgent, she moves constantly about the favoured one and chides him with new blessings. He is not unlike the snow upon the lofty Alps, that wears a rich, warm, roseate hue while the sun kisses it with his beams, but resumes its cold, chilling white immediately they have departed; while hers is an exhaustless fount of tenderness, loving even when unloved—loving with a constancy and warmth no slights, no abandonment, can quench.

Delivered from bondage, and sustained by so mighty a hand, which has enabled them to overcome Amalek in battle—(*Ex.* xvii. 8—13)—the NATION must now be formed. A law must be given to it; and, through it, to all mankind; while some especial ordinances for its own particular observance should be instituted.

Moses brings the people a message of love from Mount Sinai, as a prelude to the terrible proclama-

tion of the Law. "You saw," he says "how you were borne as on eagles' wings ; how your weakness was mighty in My strength, which made you mine in spite of them ye feared. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, and beareth them on her wings—(*Deut. xxxii. 11*)—so have I borne and carried you. Love Me, obey and serve Me, and I will be your strength, and ye shall shine like a precious treasure in the earth ; for the world is mine. Ye shall be unto Me as a kingdom of priests, and as a holy nation !"

The law of the Ten Commandments is delivered to them from Mount Sinai in terrible glory—(*Ex. xviii. 16—18*)—in glory so terrible that they entreat God will not speak with them any more, but only by the mouth of Moses—(*Ex. xx. 19*). They are told that God had thus spoken with them that a holy fear might win their hearts to love ; and they are especially cautioned against a golden and bestial idolatry—(*Ex. xx. 19—22*).

Yes, Love was in that awful splendour. She saw that their hearts were tending towards an idolatry similar to that of their late oppressors. Love would save them from sin and wrath, by

inspiring them with holy fear, that she may bless them. And they do swear fidelity to God ! Yet, while Moses is but a few days absent in the Mount, they make themselves an idol ! The women give their ornaments ; they make a golden calf ; they plume the gods of stricken Egypt with the honours of Jehovah ; and feast, with sensual joy and boisterous glee, before their new iniquity.

God punishes ; but Love spares. It is not my purpose to place on record here the daily progress of this stiff-necked race, which so resembles the career of individual man. There is a constant succession of sin, chastisement, and pardon. God hath sworn that the *Great Redeemer* shall come in the seed of Abraham ; and that they shall be a mighty people. Whenever they humbly turn to Him, He again sheds His blessings on them. Love's precious perfume is hidden within them, and preserves the vase. She has made her election. Iniquity shall receive its stripes ; transgression shall bring its chastisement. Where there might be a constant and uninterrupted prosperity and happiness, misery shall often roll her troubled tide. But that great decree will stand. To human eyes every Hebrew knee may seem to bend before this or that wretched idol ; but

in some hearts, Love's precious flame will have survived undimmed, and her glorious secret will live, bright and unfading.

And now, how many types and shadows are bestowed ! There is the pot of manna—(*Ex.* xvi. 33, 34)—Christ the precious bread from heaven. The rod that blossomed—(*Num.* xvii. 10)—as the spirit of God, gives life and beauty to the dead heart of man. The Law—(*Ex.* xxv. 16—21)—that must be placed with these in the ark, as by their aid alone man can comply with its demands. The golden mercy-seat above these, to indicate that through them combined celestial mercy will flow ; while the cherubims, with their wide outspreading wings, show that this mercy will convey the choicest blessings from heaven ; and God's resplendent glory ever shining there, that souls, thus beautified through Christ and the Eternal Spirit, shall dwell with Him for ever. The veil—(*Ex.* xxvi. 33)—that conceals all these from general gaze, instructs that Love makes no revelation to mere sense alone ; that they constitute a something that is not of the world ; that can only be compassed by the heart ; and that she does not dwell with rites and ceremonies, but in the deep recesses of the soul—(*Ex.* xxvii. 21.) Do twelve long

months always intervene between the entrances of the High Priest into this Holy of Holies ?—how rare, how unfrequent is weak man's close communion with his God ! He may comply with the whole of the ceremonial law, and yet be a stranger to Eternal Love. The High Priest cannot enter without some special sacrifice ; and no man can *alone* regain the love of Heaven and eternal life ; but only obtain access to God through the atoning blood of Christ.

Who but Love would have commanded that her people should be gently led ; and that as a fond father bears the tender infant in his bosom, so they were to be borne and conducted until they reached the Promised Land ?

And now their feet are on its borders. They have fought with Amalek and conquered. They are now really constituted as a nation. They have a religion and established laws ; God is among them, and victory is on their brow. Wherever they move they are accompanied by that cloud and flame, which at the same time direct and appoint their journey, and give them light and glory. When they rebelled, God chastised them ; but He hath never given man power against them. They have seen, have known, have felt day by day His invincible protecting

power—and behold, the land He promised fills their sight ! Spies are despatched to explore the country ; dangerous evidence of a weak and faltering faith and trust. They return, bearing with them fruit of amazing size and richness. God has not deceived them—the land is all abundance ; *but*—ah ! sin and unbelief have always their *buts*—but “the people are strong ; the cities are large and walled—and there are giants, the sons of Anak.” In vain the light that overturned Egypt shines upon the tabernacle. Israel mourns and weeps all night. The people become furious ; they are maddened by an atrocious fear, bitterly insulting to the mighty God who leads them ; they threaten and denounce their chiefs. “Would to God that we had died in Egypt ; or would to God that we had died in the wilderness. Wherefore hath the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, and to be a prey—we and our little ones ?” “Let us choose us a captain and return to Egypt”—(*Num.* xiv. 1—4). In vain Caleb—(*Num.* xiii. 30 ; xiv. 6—10.)—and Joshua extol the land, and ridicule their fears ; the excited multitude will stone them to death. But now, behold the Lord appears, filling the tabernacle with His awful glory. Oh, did not Love restrain, the

entire people had now perished ! But none of those men who left Egypt shall set their feet in that land. Their carcases shall strew the wilderness ; and their children, for whose safety they hypocritically pretend so much anxiety, and whom they would convey to Egyptian slavery, they shall obtain it ! Of all the adults, Caleb and Joshua only shall come thither. The rebellious spies are slain upon the spot ; and forty years of wandering is the decree—until every one who has been guilty of this great impiety shall have perished.

* * * * *

It is accomplished. The bleaching bones of six hundred thousand men are spread over that sandy desert. They were not fit for freedom. When they were in slavery they had plenty. They were wretched, miserable, oppressed—their children were murdered before their eyes—but they had *plenty*, and without danger ! The glorious soil of freedom, however abundant that might be, lost all its charms when it was to be won by conquest. Though houses, vineyards, cities, lands awaited them, and repose was there after the conflict, the coward fear of slavish souls possessed them all. They wanted to be crammed with liberty and food. Such as these

are not the valiant race of freedom ; they had dwelt too long in the presence of superstition, and could not bear a God who made His power felt among them. They have perished ; and now their happier children, who had never been degraded by the yoke of slavery, eager with faith, are before that Promised Land. Their arms have been crowned with victory in many a combat. Giant kings have fallen before them, like the grass under the mower's scythe. Some tribes have already an inheritance on this side Jordan ; lands they have conquered by their swords. Aaron is dead. Moses is about to follow. He is permitted to view, but may never enter Canaan. Provoked by the murmurs of rebellious Israel, he had been hasty in his speech. The man famed for meekness had spoken once—but once—unadvisedly with his lips ; and this the penalty. The legislator himself is thus made to see that by God's pure and holy law alone no soul can please ; that all stand condemned ; and none may reach heaven but the elect of Love, who, seeking it by faith, can never seek in vain.

He bids them farewell. He counsels and entreats them. He surveys the past, and repeats in their ears the precepts of their God. But while his

lips denounce the awful curses of Heaven should they slight His laws, serve other gods, and profane His holy day, how sweetly flows the voice of Love, how tender are her accents, how earnest her pleadings : “ I have sustained thee ; I have carried thee, even as the fondest father bears his feeble son. I led thee, for I was striving to secure the affections of thy heart ; I chastened thee ; I tried thee, and with hunger, that thou mightest know man does not live by bread alone, but that life proceedeth from the words of God. I loved thee, and therefore I would not behold the iniquity of thy heart, the perverseness of thy soul. It was I who chose thee ; not because thou wert great, for thou wert the smallest, the most humble in thy condition. None were ever chosen as thou wert—but it was because I loved thee. I swore thou shouldst be kept ; and have I not proved to thee My unchanging truth ? Oh, that thou hadst a heart to keep My fear, that My love might be ever at thy side ; for I would love thee, and My blessings should flow continually around thy path. Doth thy hand prevail against thine enemies to slay them ? Think not it is thine own righteousness that giveth thee the victory, but that thou art My appointed sword to punish their great wicked-

ness ; and that if thou fallest from My truth, even as they have been destroyed before thee, so shalt thou quail before thine enemies ; for though I will not utterly destroy thee, I will deprive thee of all thy blessings ; I will take from thee peace, and light, and joy."—(*Deut.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

ISRAEL IN CANAAN—LOVE ELECTS THE HOUSE OF DAVID.

THEY pass dry shod over Jordan. The people of Canaan hear these dreadful tidings—(*Josh.* v. 1)—and the hearts of the strongest droop with fear. The blood of their bravest kings becomes feeble as water. They see there has been no shortening of that arm which overwhelmed Pharaoh and his people. What hope can there be for opposing nations in presence of Him who grasps the floods in His mighty hand of power, and destroys in all their blood the vigour of its life by the mere breath of His approaching strength? The ark, before which Jordan divides—(*Josh.* iii. 15—17)—that the people may pass over, strikes down the buttressed walls of the strongest cities—(*Josh.* vi. 20). Would Night impede the course of victory, Day obeys the order to prolong his life, and remains—(*Josh.* x. 12—14)—to behold the full accomplishment of the desired work. What powers may ever marshal

themselves with success against such resistless might? As the summer rose sheds her loosened petals when the wild gusts of the tempest come sweeping by, so lofty kings and myriads upon myriads of their warriors and subjects are scattered and perish beneath the fury of His wrath.

Behold them now possessed of cities, lands, and wealth. They had not the task to prepare some unbroken soil, to clean it from the encumbrances of the ever-operating curse, to force it by heavy toil to yield subsistence ; to build, to plant, to prepare, and to wait year by year the slow progression, in order to obtain the full rewards of labour. They find and possess a land where the richest olives give abundantly their precious golden stores ; a land where cultivation has been brought to great perfection ; where bright vineyards smile with their clusters of unrivalled richness, size, and beauty, and where plenty flows on every hand. It is, indeed, a land of milk and honey, a land of joy and fatness. Ample stores of corn supply their present wants ; the mountain sides are covered with flocks and herds, while far and wide, over the swelling plains and stream-fed valleys, the ripening corn gives promise of an ample harvest. And all has been

built, planted, sown, prepared for them by men whom God has delivered like children to their slaughtering swords.

Awhile they righteously and obediently perform their appointed work. But their wealth corrupts them. They look with greedy and lustful eyes upon the trembling remnant of the inhabitants of the land. They will spare and possess these as concubines and slaves. The curse that is upon slaveholding clings to them. Disobedience once commenced, its course is rapid. They desert the Lord their strength, and sacrifice to those false gods whose impotence to save, their own success has so abundantly established.

When God goes, glory goes with Him. He will never share His honour with another. Insulted by the introduction of idol worship, it is in vain they offer sacrifice to Him. With that pollution present, He can only reply in anger. He abandons them to their own mere natural strength, and withdraws the restraint of His enfeebling influence from the heathen nations around. The blood in their veins resumes its manly vigour, their hearts regain their power, and Israel soon writhes in the chains of a hard and cruel oppression. Yet

when repentance looks through its streaming tears, and, abandoning their deluding idolatry, they pour unmixed their agonising supplications to God alone, Love sends deliverance. And in evidence that it is her work, she generally employs some feeble instrument, made resistless by her strength, to end the bondage. Now mighty hosts are discomfited and slaughtered by a few hundred combatants selected under her direction—(*Judges* vii. 4—7)—and the tyrant whose ravages had deluged the land with blood and tears, falls for ever at a woman's feet—(*Judges* iv. 17—21). But, like Pharaoh, in his obstinacy and pride, no sooner are they relieved, than idolatry again lifts its head among them. They seem to be infected with an insatiate thirst of this strange delusion. Their fires are soon burning again upon the altars of idols, all the abominations of whose worship they greedily practise; a wretched people, whose unbridled lust is continually abasing its high honours, and dragging them, soiled and polluted, in the mire of their most unprofitable iniquity.

Thus flows their stream ; sometimes so plenteous, so deep, so full, it seems ready to overpass all its banks, and then again reduced to a mere thread

in the channels it can no longer cover : now full of vigorous life, now almost exhausted. Chequered ages thus roll on until a *Crown* rests upon the head of DAVID. Behold them now replenished. They are said to have been as fed with marrow and fatness from on high. No enemy can withstand them. All fall before them; the boundaries of the nation are enlarged; the promises of Jehovah to Abraham as to their territory are completely fulfilled. God reigns without a rival in the heart of David. He has never contaminated himself with idolatrous worship. Like his great progenitor Abraham, he has been free from this debasing and insulting sin. And now Love marks another great step in the progress of her terrestrial revelation. As she separated Abraham from the human race, that in his family the precious perfume of her great salvation should reside, so now she separates David from the rest of Abraham's issue, and declares that through *his* family she will give her divine mystery to earth. How exquisite is the gradual progression ! how tender and how beneficent to man ! Surely such a declaration will keep this royal family free from that abomination which has so often deprived the Israelites of the blessings of Heaven, and brought such trouble, humiliation, suffering, and weakness !

Love's lofty towering rock of human safety again stands visibly in the midst of the great dark ocean of eternal doom; again her beseeching finger points and directs the wandering gaze of sinful man to where the heaven-hid mountain cuts the sky. There is now a chosen house, among that her chosen people; elected by her, and declared by her to be the vehicle of grace to man. The eye has no longer to wander over the tribes of Israel; the mind to speculate as to which will obtain that wondrous honour. The great Conqueror of Sin will come of royal issue; of the tribe of Judah; of the house and lineage of David, the king; the God-appointed, not the man-elected, Sovereign of His chosen people. Love has continually followed an ascending course in her revelations of her eternal mind as regards this great work of human redemption; Adam, Noah, Abraham, David: Man, Chief, Prince, King: and next, the Christ, the Incarnate God.

But this regal line emulates the chosen race. Its rebellious declensions from God will bring their stripes; the stinging rod of chastisement will scourge and seem almost to destroy. Yet the oath of God is there. There is a fixed unalterable purpose as regards the throne of David. His issue shall reign while lasts the eternal sky!

CHAPTER XV.

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE—ITS DESTRUCTION—
CAPTIVITY.

BEHOLD the floods of glory that fill the Temple for which David made such costly preparation, and that Solomon, his son and successor, has built. God descends again in flame in answer to the prayers and sacrifice of dedication. Again the eternal fire consumes the offerings on the altar. God accepts the house in which He sets His name. The assembled nation prostrates itself before Him, for all eyes behold some of the unrivalled sheen of His eternal glory—(1 *Kings* viii. 11). And now abundant earthly blessings are showered upon this chosen race ; great and general prosperity ; national fame, and power, and wealth. The monarch is celebrated through all the neighbouring nations for his great endowments ; and to hear his words of wisdom, sovereigns come from afar. A splendour like that of the throne of David's son has never

before been known by the people of Israel.—*Vide* reign of Solomon, *Kings* and *Chronicles*.

Alas! they will not allow this to continue. Before Solomon dies, temples to Chemosh, to Baal, to Moloch, and many others, have been built upon the hills around Jerusalem. There they stand, affronting God in His holy Temple. Altars for sacrifice soon rise in every street of the city, and the burning incense carries up a continual accusation against this perverse people and their kings. In vain God sends warnings by His prophets. In vain He has rent the nation, leaving only two tribes out of the twelve under the sceptre of David's issue—(1 *Kings* xi. 30—31). From time to time the throne of Judah is occupied by a monarch who fears the God of his fathers, and whose submission and efforts to restore the service of God alone, turn away the wrath that is consuming the ten tribes of Israel, who follow continually after the golden calves and other iniquities, until the flood of vengeance pours upon them out of Assyria, and every horror that has a name riots among Israel delivered over to destruction. The nation perishes; the remnants are carried away from their native land into a

hopeless captivity; and men from the neighbouring heathen nations are sent to people that which they have lost.

And Judah? for Judah now alone remained. The evil was ineradicable. The warning fate of Israel fails in its errand of mercy. As the people after the flood, looking upon the bow in the clouds, and feeling assured of safety from any repetition of the deluge, abandoned themselves to iniquity, so the people of Judah seem to have thought themselves secure under the shadow of their Temple, whatever outrage they might offer to the God who had deigned to show His presence there—(*Jer.* vii. 9 to end). And now the hour of Judah has arrived. The King of Babylon does for her what the Assyrians had done for her sister Israel. All the penalties threatened by Moses in God's name as the punishment of continuous impenitence fall upon this devoted city. Women who would scarcely deign to touch the earth with their dainty feet, so pampered were they by wealth and luxury, look with ravening fury upon their new-born children, and feed on the flesh of those whom love would have surrounded with its tenderest care. The fierce, tiger-

like rage of gnawing hunger gleams in eyes that lately swam in humid rapture, as the heart drank in the words and tokens of devoted love. The thirsty sword is insatiate in its desire for blood. The unburied dead pour their putrifying gases into the atmosphere, and pestilence, the child of foul corruption, wages an exterminating war—fed, as it is, continually by the decaying bodies of the ever-augmenting victims. The whole land is thrashed until not a grain remains; desolation rushes over it with gigantic strides, and ruin, utter ruin, is everywhere. As some hot dragon at a meagre pool consumes it even to its very last foul drop to assuage his raging thirst, so feed the flaming hoofs of fiery *Bel* on every pasture, leaving nothing behind them but burning wastes; wherever they tread, destruction marks their passage; wherever his scorching breath is felt, all hostile human clay must perish; the wild rage of slaughter floods furious through his every vein, and the gloomy regions of the dead are cloyed with ravished and bloody victims of his still unsatisfied lust and hate.

A rapid mortality consumes Jerusalem. The want is so great—there is little left but human

flesh; and they who feed on that precious food do not long retain the life to prolong which they commit such horrors. Frail beauty sinks, and manhood cannot live. Still a faithful and desperate, though famishing remnant of his valiant band is with the Heaven-doomed monarch. Yes; though Pestilence and Famine are trampling thousands upon thousands throughout the city beneath their cloven feet. These depopulating fiends, whose visage is indeed awful to behold, are stripping the shrinking flesh from every unnourished limb. Oh! dear to their hellish ears is the music of the soul's despair, as their foul lips suck life's marrow from the bone. See how they revel on that lovely form, while maddened beauty tears from out her head the soiled and matted hair, which was wont to float glistening and in rich luxuriance upon the breeze, spreading around the costly odours of voluptuous care. Fiends! have ye no mercy? Feed, oh, feed in pity on her brain, and kill at once that frantic misery, that insupportable agony of protracted hunger's death! Ah!—they mock at beauty—they deride the brave—they yell with hideous glee over what was manly strength; and thrust down all in one uncovered sepulchre. The

rich, the cheerful, the luxurious, perfumed city, wrapped in the dark clouds of an inevitable fate, is now one foul, loathsome, universal, open tomb.

But the fierce invader hath not yet placed one foot within this city, so beloved of God—this stately Zion. The insatiate bloodhounds roam around its walls, and raving Plunder, grinding his teeth, curses the gods that delay the gratification of his impure desires, and bribes them for an early day with promise of an abundant spoil. The hour advances, though not by their power. The King and his faithful guard abandon the city. There is not a particle of food remaining, and valour would now linger there in vain. Silent—swift—in secret—beneath the covering mantle of the night, they endeavour to escape. And thou art left, fair city, with all thy poor, helpless creatures! Thy hour is near at hand. With the morrow's sun, those fiends shall perish that have been revelling amid the ruins of thy human pride and beauty. Gaunt Famine will be drowned in that last crimson stream, that willing flows to hide the loathing shame of foul pollution; and Pestilence be consumed in all-devouring fire.

Eight hundred captives led to Babylon! Of

all the myriads of the royal city, these alone survive! Famine, Pestilence, and Chaldea's sharpened sword have done their work. Lust was not sated, or Murder satisfied, till *that* last victim struggled, shrieked, and, in Death's grasp, completed the long catalogue of woe.

The holy walls of the Temple are defiled with blood. The mangled corpse is on its altars, and in its most sacred place. Loud shouts of savage triumph peal beneath its gorgeous roof; the deliberate plunder of its wealth commences; the hands of all-foul Pollution have filled its courts with what nothing but consuming flame can cleanse.

The King is prisoner. He has been deprived of sight; and, by a fiendish refinement of cruelty, the last thing he was allowed to behold was the slaughter of his children — (2 *Kings* xxv. 3—7). Fettered, sightless, childless, there is no release for him but in death.

The furious pride of the conqueror, who had been permitted as the scourge of Heaven, is not slow in performing the purifying work of God. The Temple is destroyed by fire, which spreads through all Jerusalem, whose walls are beaten to the ground! A ruined city! Another monument of the destructive power of Sin!

Love, who to the very last had been wronged, insulted, scorned, and defied, concealed her face, while Wrath rushed furious by. And then who may abide the hand of God's awful judgments!

Yet on the head of some forlorn captive by the waters of Babylon she at this same moment sheds her world-redeeming beams. Some humbled scion of the royal house, who loathed the sin, and now weeps over the dire disgrace, has never ceased to be under her protection, the object of her constant solicitude and care. At her command the uplifted sword must spare; gaunt Famine looked at him, but, baffled, hurries harmless past. Grim Pestilence averted from him her fatal glance. No power in earth or hell could separate him from the sacred vase, whom Love hath chosen for her purpose, and on whose blessed head she pours the precious perfume of a world's redemption from eternal woe—(2 *Kings* xxv. 9, 10).

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STREAM OF EVIL—JONAH'S MISSION.

THERE is an enchanting variety, a constant renewal, change, and increase of sensation in ascending some lofty mountain range. We leave behind the radiant sun-lit river, with its joyous dance—we emerge from the deep, dark ravine—we gain an elevation that affords a view in some directions over a wide expanse. At every summit we attain the sublimity augments; our thoughts relax their hold on the forsaken plain; and all throng to that loftiest spot, that desired goal, whence the craving eye may roam around the horizon on every side, with nothing above or beyond to limit its delights or to restrict its range, undisputed sovereign of all the wonders of the extended circle. And thus it is in tracing the steps of Heavenly Love. The soul lingered for awhile by the river and in the ravine. It reached an eminence. Emerging from some obscurity, it

gained peak after peak with wider and wider range. Now it springs upward, it burns to reach that point from which it may scan in one full unbroken view the amazing scheme; the obscure, the shadowy, the restricted past, the glorious, lucid, clear, and boundless future (the stream issuing from some cleft of the wood-clad mount, to the noble river where all earth's navies may proudly ride); from that first sinner shrinking at the sentence of his body's death, to those countless millions bursting the prison of the tomb; from that poor exile without the gates of Eden, with her streaming eyes, to the flight of heaven and earth from His presence who condescended to be born in the stable of Bethlehem.

Have we not now left the plain far, far below? Do we not begin to view the summit standing distinct and clear in its full blaze of light? What though the rage of the Chaldean ravaged Judah and destroyed the throne of David? We make no downward step; we are continually ascending. Whether Zion resounds with songs of triumph, as obedience brings her an increase of joy and blessing, or, through the provocation of foul idolatry, every bliss lies withered, and the nation

overwhelmed, nothing arrests or retards the advance of Love's great plan to raise the human race from death to heaven. She is like some stately vessel bound to a far-distant port. Though clouds pour down their torrents ; though storm raises the waves into mountains, and from time to time she lies shivering in the deep trough of the furious sea, while no gleam of sunshine can pierce the massive unbroken clouds, and all the face of nature wears a dark look of terror; still she maintains her way, still she pursues her course.

Was Judah broken by the might of Babylon ? Had not the frown of God been there Babel's red hand had failed. The sentence had been pronounced as a punishment of their full iniquity. When Love first elected Abraham she stored up food for faith. She would show to him and to his seed the good intended for them ; and the certain evil that would fall upon them if they departed from her ways. She spread the varied map before their eyes, and left it to their choice for good or evil. In Abraham's awful vision the Egyptian bondage was foreshown. But whence that bondage ? Was it not the fruit of the guilty hate and envy that sold a brother, too fondly

beloved of his father, for a slave—their hearts so steeled against him that neither tears nor anguish could procure one ray of pity? God foresaw and foretold this and its results, overruling the latter for the advancement of His purpose. The forty years of wandering in the Desert was an open judgment, in the very hour of their unprovoked rebellion. Their honoured leader, when about to resign his office, gave them the choice of life or death. He placed the Tree of Knowledge before them, and showed them the counsel of God to incite them to wisdom; while every horror of Chaldean or Assyrian rage was proclaimed by his lips, and still remains an imperishable record—*(Deut. xxviii.)*

But never has this wretched dust of earth so much cause to tremble as when it is appointed by God to be the agent for human punishment; when in His displeasure He yields awhile His children to their power. It is then indeed balanced on a mountainous wave, whence its next plunge may be into the most hopeless perdition. God's children may be left, but they are *never* given; while the chastising instrument may be actuated by the vilest and most evil passions. It is, indeed,

generally so ; and is filling its cup of wickedness while advancing God's purpose. But His discontent with the victim, gives the guilty agent no favour in His sight. Be it a nation, be it an individual, its mission is alike in the eternal plan ; and every excess of evil zeal will find its punishment in time or in eternity. The same Almighty hand that would not preserve Judah from the Chaldean scourge, and thus gave permission to its violence, does but wait the moment that Eternal Wisdom hath appointed to wreak its vengeance for those infamous atrocities. The same Spirit that foretold these ruthless horrors, if the voice of Love were scorned, hath proclaimed the superior woe of Babylon ; appointed her yet unborn conqueror ; declared her utter desolation ; and that for her crime she shall remain a warning heap till earth's remotest hour—(*Isa.* xlvii. 6—11 ; xiii. 17—22). “ Because I was wroth with my polluted land I allowed thee to chastise it. But thou hadst no pity ; thou hast shown no mercy, therefore shall tenfold ruin fall on thee. She shall be restored ; thou shalt be a desert for ever.”

In this way Love taught from age to age the system pursued by God in the government

of the world. She exhibited to favoured man the fixed, unchanging, Eternal Will; showed by long anticipation His designs, and left to Him the choice of the good or the evil. For though these things were shown to Israel by her prophets, did Jehovah reign for Israel and Judah alone? Would the record have been thus preserved had the revelation been intended only for their warning and direction?

No. By it God makes known both to individuals and to nations the secrets of His nature, concealing nothing that could be necessary to guide their steps in the way of peace. There is no darkness *there* to eyes that search for light. The glorious line of prophets He inspired, were guiding stars by which faith might trace step by step the course of Love to that meridian glory, when she would, by the complete fulfilment of their predictions, resume those scattered rays of light, and concentrate them all in that matchless brilliance which should illumine the world. That fulfilment has displayed to mortal eyes the power and truth of God; it has stripped vain scoffing doubt of every subterfuge, and furnished an inductive evidence by which calm, unprejudiced, un-

biassed reason may arrive at the conviction of the certain fulfilment of those remoter prophecies yet in the womb of time and on the confines of eternity.

Were not the lessons of their chastisement intended for every age and people? What were the sins that changed God's smiles to anger, and called down wrath in vengeance on guilty heads? Was the land delivered over to the horrors of carnage, pestilence, and famine for breaches of the ceremonial law? Was it for this their soil was iron, and their sky was brass; dug, dressed, tilled, sown, yet giving no reward to labour; rich with no early showers, and with no latter rain? No. It was not for a missing bullock, or a sheep, or for a goat withheld, or for some worthless, blemished lamb, but for breaches of the general holy law of God, that binds our souls as well as theirs. They burned incense to other fancied gods; they thrust aside the sacred rest of His holy Sabbath. Crime rushed in through these two opened gates, and soiled the land with every foul pollution. A sordid avarice, with its griping hand; extortion, with its huge elastic maw; and that enormous crime of the

deepest and most deadly hue, vindictive, calculating perjury, where fancied interest moulds her plastic lie—these made the land hideous. Love kept her own, but would not impede the vengeance. The love of money!—(*Jer.* vi. 13; viii. 10, &c.) All that hideous crop of damning produce came from this fruitful, baneful root; a root no earthly sword could ever extirpate, and that only dies where Love regenerates the heart.

Salvation's day moves on with measured pace, and prophecy proclaims the abundant tide of grace to ruined man. Messages from God to the heathen nations serve to indicate the wide and full intent of Love. The seed of Abraham have no longer a monopoly of the revelations of Eternal Mind. The hour is drawing nigh when Love will openly clasp all mankind at once in her fond, warm embrace; when her perfume shall issue from the vase, and float, an odorous gale, through every land.

The reluctant feet of Jonah carry the warning of an approaching judgment to the great city, Nineveh; a heathen city! No sooner is the message delivered than there arises an universal lamentation—(*Jonah* iii. 5—10). Palace and hovel

unite their voices ; and because of this repentance Love averts the intended blow. The Israelitish prophet is indignant that penitence should thus redeem this people, not of the chosen race of Abraham, from the threatened doom ; and sits down near the city, mourning over this to him inexplicable mercy—(*Jonah* iv. 1—5).

It is the time of greatest heat ; the cloudless eastern sky is in a blaze, and wounds the shrinking sight with its too ardent glare. Jonah is suffering. But a plant springs up beside him, very rapid in its growth and of abundant foliage, under the shade of which he is soothed and comforted—(*Jonah* iv. 6). And with this new-born contentment, there he waits to see what will be the issue—whether God will really spare, or will destroy this city at the end of the predicted forty days.

I know of nothing more calculated to interest and excite the human mind than this account of Jonah. We behold him as he was in reality—an unconscious type. It was not revealed to him that he shadowed forth a great mystery of Love ; that he prefigured One who would descend, a voluntary victim, into the grave to quell the awful

storm that Justice sends against ruined man ;
One who, remounting from that soul-loathed place,
sends God's last warning to His human creatures ;
a warning that will be received by Gentile nations
who will acknowledge His Divine mission,
and thus escape destruction.

The prophet's limbs are refreshed by the shade
of this umbrageous plant, and he no longer dreads
the hot breath of the sultry noon that before
caused him torment. Any one who has lived in
those burning climes may make the prophet's
shady joys his own. Memory will recall scenes
and circumstances that may enable him in reality
to feel the soft delicious charms of those green
leaves ; the dreamy bliss with which the eyes
lift, in languid gaze, their cooled yet lazy lids ;
the sweet, enchanting, sensual touch over all his
being before he falls into a sleep, made tranquil
by the firm conviction that on the morrow it will
prove impervious even to the finest ray ; a verdant
barrier, sufficient to exclude the most subtle
envoys of that mighty orb.

But he who confides his mind's and his body's
joys to things of earth, imperils both of them.
Man, who is infatuated by his earthly sympathies,

although he views his pleasures come like the clouds that traverse our northern skies, forgets that what thus approaches with such vapoury insolidity may prove as evanescent as a dream ; forgets that life itself is but a single ray, shot through the bosom of eternal night, unless the hand of Love be there to arrest it in its course, and bear it upward to her own bright regions of eternal day.

The morrow, on which man will ever build, under the delusive guidance of earthly hope ; the morrow, when his cup is to be running over with the abundance of his joy ; the morrow, man's eternity, until Love bestows on him that above ; the morrow, whose rich promises for the most part deceive—the morrow comes, and where are his anticipated raptures ? Behold, it brings him nothing but a withered gourd. The root has been attacked by some hateful worm — (*Jonah* iv. 7, 8) — it now no longer supplies the plant with that nourishment on which its verdure depends—the sapless veins have lost their vigour, and can no more support the extension of those pulpy leaves that pass rapidly through their stages of decay, drooping, shrivelled, pendent,

withered, dead ; leaves that with the first diminution of their beauty, lost their entire worth.

As the fiery sun mounts, blazing up the heavens, and the stricken verdure dies beneath his consuming rays, new floods of discontent pour their waters over the troubled soul of the fainting prophet. For not only hath the wounded gourd withdrawn its umbrageous treasures from above his suffering head, on which every piercing ray now descends with unmitigated fury, but that dreaded haze comes marching rapidly up from the desert, that sand-mist, borne along by a hot east wind, which brings a suffocating atmosphere of death. The fine impalpable and burning sand overspreads the body with a withering crust. The pores of the skin are sealed up ; no drop of moisture bursts through them ; that subtle monster is consuming it at its source ; the heavy-laden breast, in its laborious breathing, inhales the blistering dust, till respiration is almost destroyed ; the sluggish blood moves slowly through the veins, a viscous, thickening fluid, that can scarcely be received by or obtain an impulse from the heart ; vitality indeed is at its lowest ebb, while the clogged, oppressed lungs are drawing in

that solid flame—and the prophet prays that he may be allowed to find relief among the senseless dead.

Love's messengers have done their work of preparation, her voice comes to Jonah in reproof of that displeasure at God's mercy which he had dared to manifest. "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? Thou wouldest have pity on that for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; *and much cattle*"—(*Jonah* iv. 9—11).

How sweetly Love proclaims there is nothing so mean and feeble that it escapes her care! In view of this passage, we cannot help reverting to the original constitution of the world before Adam's transgression, and to the fact that until after the flood the life of animals was not allowed to be taken by man to make them his food. There is something very suggestive in this extraordinary passage, and we ought at least to treat with the greatest possible tenderness, what

Love deems worthy of regard when visiting man in mercy. And Israel? Is not she the gourd whose worth may not be put in comparison with the great mass of the human family, that she should be preserved while the vengeance of Heaven was poured among its many nations? Does not the death of the gourd point at her doom for her impenitence; while at the voice of One who rises triumphant from the grave (after having been three days in its power, as had Jonah in that of the fish), kings, nobles, and peasants among the Gentile world swell the triumphs of Love's conquering name, who gathers within her ample hand of all that lie scattered over the wide shore of time, rocks, pebbles, and the smallest grains of sand, to place them in commingled beauty around her ocean of eternity?

CHAPTER XVII.

GOD'S MESSAGES BY THE PROPHETS.

JONAH is the commencement of a rich and ample flood of warning, counsel, and prophecy. Heaven, always under the influence of Love, is waiting to relent if men will but submit and bow their hearts to God, who sends another Israelite prophet—(*Nahum* ii. 9 ; iii. 4—7)—to a proud, idolatrous nation, whose extraordinary prosperity and wealth has become a snare to her neighbours, who behold in it the fancied power of her idol gods, to whose protection they attribute it. She has become so famous all around for her abundant riches, that avarice is everywhere prostrating itself in adoration of her delusions, hoping to procure thereby a little shower of that same golden rain ; some of that luxury that makes others poor because she exceeds them ; which makes all that they possess seem as nothing, because they do not fully attain to her degree ! This is the poi-

sonous snare of that pernicious, craving Envy, that strips life's tree of all its beautiful blossoms if it hath a neighbour more richly dowered; that pales poor beauty's cheek, and robs her eye of its lustre if she be in presence of some superior loveliness. Sin hath no toil more fatal than this of envy. It is the envenomed source of avarice, hatred, and many bitter passions. It hath a thousand forms, and there is abomination in all of them. It springs from meanness, making it more mean. It is not unfrequently the dear ally of murder, and it has a voice that is ever secretly prompting to some infamy. It hates what hath never wronged it, merely because it possesses something in which it is deficient; some natural gift; some of blind Fortune's gilded toys; something of birth, or of that perfume of society not always attainable. Oh, it is a yawning gulf, nor less a loathsome tomb; a gulf worlds could not fill while there were other worlds to desire—a tomb, whose touch imparts the stain of corruption. It is the eldest progeny of Satan, and whispered Eve when she stood beside that fatal tree. Hast thou found it stirring in thy heart? Take no rest until thou hast ejected or destroyed

it. It hath the odour of those dismal regions it hath helped to people, and to which it daily sends new victims.

Inspired prediction takes a wider range, and mingles the far distant with the immediate future. While the prophet pours forth his accusations and foretels a dreadful approaching woe, his spirit, hovering over the stream of time, points with its illuminating finger to what is floating on its troubled surface. He shows the world beneath Divine command, and everything therein subject and subservient to the Divine government; that the boastful pride of human power is but an empty breath, and that nations are mere links in earth's appointed chain; links of a fixed and determined length, in a chain also limited, whose ends are firmly held in the grasp of God's unchanging love. When he denounces the vile ingratitude and unbridled lust of Judea, with her stupid faith in idols, set up by foul imaginations, at the instigation of sin working among the evil passions of the heart, and proclaims a punishment so awful that the withered land shall become an universal bier, while a poor, meagre, plundered, ruined remnant shall be held in painful bondage in a foreign country, he declares God's

purpose of a great Redeemer, to issue from the House of David, to be so fixed that nothing can change it or impede its fulfilment. They may wantonly cast away their blessings, but Love's promise is still with them through the dark and gloomy day, preparing their return to Jerusalem, where they *must be* sustained till earth beholds the *Incarnate Lord*. They may scorn His favour—they may worship their idols, but they *must fulfil* His immutable designs. He holds aloft the blazing torch of truth, and illumines a glorious future for the eye of Faith, where she beholds, not the stained material power of one conquering nation—some lofty throne amid vast heaps of slain, where the wild shouts of carnage drown the shrieks and groans of human suffering—but the elevation of Love's pure and brilliant standard as an ensign of peace to a sin-pardoned world. Rivers of rich delight—(*Isaiah*)—issuing from Zion, carry their ample waters through the parched realms of earth, nourishing the lovely trees that adorn their banks and sustaining them in perpetual and abundant fruit. Nations far remote, kings, queens, and princes, enjoy the blessings of that deepening tide, feast on the exhaustless fruits of those healing trees, and

bring with joy and gladness their grateful offerings to the Eternal King who reigns in Zion.

The Prophet Joel, borne away on the bright wing of faith nine centuries onward, and illumined by the Eternal Spirit, beholds that flame which moved upon the surface of earth's waters—(*Gen. i. 2*)—before her day arrived, when dismal chaos fled to a far distant spot, where Love's sweet hand may embellish some other precious world, and chase him thence to yet another lair, to be anew cast forth, subdued and quelled, till his dark feet shall find no speck on which to stand throughout the immense illimitable pace,—descending among the favoured children of Zion and shedding its glory on their forms of clay; while he is still carried forward, until the awful terrors of that last fearful scene of earth's great judgment play around his head, and he finds there but one only safety, that of being enrolled in the glorious band of Zion's sons, under the protection of Him to whom all judgment will be delivered, "*because he is the Son of Man.*"

After all, what is this material world, that so captivates our souls, when compared with that which the Eternal Spirit has so indistinctly, and yet so gloriously, revealed? What was the promise of Canaan

to the rescued from Egypt, when beheld in conjunction with such a future? But Israel loved her idols, and plunged into every pollution she was appointed to punish. God therefore shows His purpose concerning her in that sad dirge of the inspired AMOS, where she appears in company with Judah, Syria, Tyre—the race of Esau, Philistia, Ammon, and Moab. He points at the same time to the sins and their punishments. God then piles up a lasting record, and designs to justify himself to the human mind. And ought we, even for a moment, to forget that He who thus reveals these mundane woes to man, and who leaves no spot where incredulity may show her soul-destroying face, except to the most obstinate perversity, is the same who prepares the future woe and bestows the eternal bliss?

Is it not a vast beneficence to place this evidence before the eyes of men while inviting them to endless life, in order that mind, which is so obscured and circumscribed by visible matter, should see as He sees, and be rescued from the grasp of doubt, the parent of such irremediable mischief? Look at the catalogue of Israel's delinquencies given by HOSEA. Behold how MICAH pleads with rebellious Judah, utters the dreadful name of Babylon, and

tells of woe and of bondage, the loss of empire and of land. And yet these predictions of destruction are accompanied by words of precious promise regarding the Kingdom of our blessed Lord—the fair, the lovely Zion. And while chiding their rebellious hearts, how mightily his words reveal the yearnings of Love's outraged tenderness, as she declares that all she has ever sought from them is justice, mercy, and humility !—(*Micah* vi. 3, 6—9.)

Read ! Love weeps ! Her words are tears because she knows they are in vain. But a century has passed since *Joel* spake, and now, when pointing to her peaceful reign, she directs their eyes to the city of Bethlehem, as the place of her appearance in human form to fulfil her eternal purpose. Their awful destruction, and the subjection of the remnant to the Chaldean yoke far from their ruined city, is approaching, and Love gives fresh food to faith. She now names the place of birth as well as the family of David's Royal House, and in the town of Bethlehem the Incarnate Word descends to earth to commence His peaceful sway.

“To do justice ; to love mercy ; and to walk humbly with thy God.” What a heavenly perfume breathes in these sweet words, and only this re-

quired to rescue from its evils a nation, now smitten, staggering, the continual bloody prey of most cruel violence! Only this! And what is the great invincible obstacle Love encounters? The cruel devouring thirst of GAIN. It is not that they denied *power* to God. They had seen too much of its exercise to be able to do this. But there seems to have been an ineradicable tendency to the belief that the inferior deities, represented by their stocks and stones, conferred *wealth*. It is to procure this that the unnatural father devotes his firstborn to Moloch—for this that the yearning mother represses the fond impulse of her heart, consumes her burning tears, and consents to the sacrifice of her newborn child, the opener of the womb, the bearer of maternity. Isaiah, with his piercing eloquence, points to this sin in colours of horrid brilliance. He rends off all its covering, he strips it from head to foot, and with the glowing light of Love exhibits it in all its deformity. No uninspired pen may vie with his. Read his earlier chapters—regard carefully those pages; if the reptile, that love of gain, be in thy heart, there is something there that should sear thine eyes—something that should fill thee with affright, if he lifts his crest, and has made his home in the secret places of thy being.

There is a warning record there for man and for nations until the remotest hour of time. Thy soul—the souls of thy people—are these as dross in thy sight when compared with that darling Gain; are they imponderous against it in the balance? Dost thou use, and invite, and permit thy subjects to abuse God's sacred day of rest? Is wealth more influential with thee than His commands? Thou art sinning as Judah sinned. Thou dost not bow thyself before some carved block, but thou dost not less impinge His claim of *single* worship. Whatever is allowed to vie with Him is an idol in His sight, and will bring His condemnation. One sin links with another, until the man or the nation becomes offensive in His pure nostrils, whose nature and whose will can never change; and He consumes in His wrath men and nations, with their unhallowed gains.

Judah, chastised with heavy warning blows, is yearly sinking; she is often sore stricken; but these dark waters of adversity seem rather to increase than to remove her obstinacy. Were it not that for Love's sacred purpose a remnant *must* be spared, Jerusalem and all Judea would have shared the fate of the Cities of the Plain—(Sodom

and Gomorrah). She is looking with dread toward Syria. Isaiah reveals the mighty changes that are to take place among the heathen nations within a certain period; Syria a prey to Assyrian hosts; Nineveh destroyed by the Chaldeans, who shall smite Judah and devastate Egypt; a heavy catalogue of blood and woe for one hundred and forty years—(*Isa. vii.*)

The overruling power of God in the affairs of men and nations was never before so amply declared. He sits in judgment on the great conquering kingdoms. He appoints the sword: He gives strength for victory; and tells how that victor's pride and barbarity and sin shall cause his fall: He strides over these centuries of change to call by *name*—Cyrus—the leader of a nation yet unknown to fame, anointed by Him to destroy Babylon, and send back the remnant of Judah to their land; restoring to them part of the sacred spoil of the Temple, and aiding them to raise that edifice from its ruins.

These revelations of Eternal Mind, these condescensions to human incredulity, may well justify our condemnation, as they did that of the Jews, if we resist such marvellous evidence of the appli-

cation of Almighty power. Why doth He thus disclose His secret mind, and proclaim the destinies of mighty nations? Is it that man may become fully aware of his littleness, and renounce his impious pride? that every nation, in the vanity of its success, throughout all time, may be reminded that stability and strength are not in gold? that power abused, and wealth obtained in a manner displeasing to God, stand on the verge of destruction, and enfold the elements of decay and death? that all earthly power is delegated by Him, and may, like the life of that frail gourd, be resumed in a night? As the colts that roam at will in unlimited freedom over the wide, wild Pampas, bear the mark of future destiny, and though they may range wherever the tempting stream, a richer herbage, need, or impulse, or attraction, may decide, they hold that freedom subject to a law that when their strength is ripe asserts its claim, and sends the ball or lasso to enforce its power—is it to show that thus nations are permitted to expand until arrested by the controlling fiat of the Almighty?

These warning lessons are undoubtedly in God's intention. But there is another object also in view, and this is chief: His messengers are sent to

proclaim the approaching advent of Eternal Love. He desires that they should obtain credence, and excite wonder ; praise ; hope to sustain His feeble, stricken people during the dark period of their captivity ; *and prove to every future child of Adam that Love herself prepared the important birth.* He sought thus to arrest the imagination of mankind, and guide it through the long, dark, untravelled future, starred by His predictions as by worlds of varied light ; to subdue the stubborn will ; to enthral the mind by the aid of its own reasoning powers—*the part fulfilled confirms the whole.* Love shows herself among these predictions in an attitude of the most tender entreaty, beseeching human weakness ; she holds God's word, which is the bead-string of earth, in her pure, bright hands ; she points to the swift, unerring course of every separate globule, until it falls into the unfathomed bowl of a dread eternity ; shows them all—all in motion on the polished cord where none may tarry, none are allowed to rest—none may cling in their reluctance to depart ; and then she says to us and to all men : “ So sure as the guiding star shone over Bethlehem, so sure are the joys and the terrors of the great judgment day of Christ.”

“In the city of Bethlehem”—“of the line of David.” These are prophetic stars, to shine through the night of dark centuries. And now behold another brilliant orb—“A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.” Without this revelation, what stretch of human thought could penetrate the great counsels of Love? It is to be a Royal Babe, of David’s House, yet of no earthly sire. And now it is predicted that the dark and gloomy Galilee shall especially rejoice in the presence of this desire of all nations—(*Isa. ix.*) How exquisite is the description of the Kingdom of Peace, the Empire of Divine Love, under this woman-born Immanuel—(*Isa. ix. and xi.*) Not for Israel alone, this sweet glory of the Messiah’s kingdom. The glowing truth spreads wide its beauteous wings. The perfume in the vase has been stored for all the tribes of earth ; and when its odour is once permitted to escape into the atmosphere, it must float victorious round the entire globe. God’s delight in the chosen race of Abraham was that there He localised His Church ; but when the mighty plan of Love shall be fulfilled by the coming of Christ, the universal family of man shall form her great confederation—(*Isa. liv.*) “There shall be one fold under one shepherd.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOLDEN IMAGE—HEATHEN HOMAGE TO GOD.

WE at last view the mountain top ; we are drawing nearer and nearer. A dazzling glory gilds the lofty peak. Love hath made a mighty revelation. Although our path may be awhile rugged and gloomy, still, ever and anon, we reach some point whence we behold the glowing summit, whose light is ever there to urge our footsteps onward. Love, that marks our way, will not permit us to wander by the streams of Chaldea ; we may not listen to the plaintive tone that denies the songs of Zion in that land of sad captivity. If we linger for a moment, it can only be on some projecting rock where no shadow falls ; where Love exhibits her power to heathen eyes, paling all their glories with even the faintest of her rays, while throwing the odour of her perfume into the nostrils of the proudest kings of earth ; and demonstrating the littleness of their pride and grandeur, whenever she

would curb their rage, to protect and defend her children.

When his bark is floating triumphantly on the stream of power, there seem to be no limits to the bloated pride of a human being. As kingdoms and subjects watch with trembling or suspicious anxiety for every new indication of his presumptuous will, he increases in his self-importance—and, in his own eyes, his form expands—until at last he deems himself to be almost a god. Is he not the arbiter of destinies? Of what consequence are all those meaner creatures of the earth, save as they may minister to his designs and subserve his pleasures? They have nothing in unison with him. He believes himself to have attained to an inapproachable height of sublimity; he is a concentrated essence of humanity; millions of those around could not furnish the properties that dwell in his exalted nature; they breathe the same air, but that is all they have in common with him; it acts not on them as in him, converting the heart into a polished stone, where, as in a mirror, he constantly beholds self, great self—the only object it ever offers to his admiring gaze. Mere ordinary man becomes to him of about as much importance in the scale of creation, as

the tiny minnow is in comparison with the enormous whale; a little paltry insignificance, only too much honoured by his condescension in making it for a moment subservient to his use. Nor is this any matter for our astonishment. Some dulcet tribute is ever ready on each flatterer's tongue; and men place themselves beneath his feet for his delicious tread, making themselves like the sands on the ocean shore to his sublime magnificence, that rolls its crested waves among their dastard spirits. When I look at one in whom power attains this crushing height of influence, the meanness that surrounds him most occupies my mind. The crouching slaves regard him as what he has grown to be in his own eyes, as if the microscope really enlarged the object that is viewed through it; or the increasing bulk that fear or interest may attribute to some loathsome insect did really transform it to an elephant; while, though they might hollow out mountains for its residence, it would still appear to me small, and vile and noxious. Make the human pedestal on which you place such a thing high as you will, it remains in reality only the same wretched, filthy, disgusting thing it was before. It is that crouching meanness that makes such a mean thing great; and rarely or

never anything in its nature or its attributes. Obsequious vileness will take a straw and convert it into an object of terror to itself; exalting the thing whose weakness rendered it incapable of mischief—surrounding it with sharp vimineous twigs, that will draw blood at every touch—and then falling down and revering the central insignificance—opening its stupid eyes in ecstatic wonder, and lending its own power to flay itself at the command of that small straw! Thousands will watch eagerly for the decay or removal of one of those twigs, and press forward to occupy its envied place; millions will be ready to split the skies with their plaudits that they should possess so great and so wise a straw! And thus it is that man, who scorns and contemns the God whose angry breath is eternal perdition, humiliates himself before the creature of his own vanity, makes it his scourge, and gives himself up entirely to its will.

We are in Babylon the great, the capital of the Chaldean rule, where dwells a monarch who dreams a dream, but the vision passes away with the shadowy night, leaving him in the morning no trace of it beyond a painful gnawing consciousness, that such a thing did strangely trouble his great heart—

(*Dan.* ii. 1—5). He sends hastily for all his magicians and learned men, and asks them of his dream. They reasonably enough require to be told the dream, and they will find the interpretation. But what is reason, except such as suits his purpose, to one at whose breath a million swords will leap from their scabbards! He commands their execution if they do not within a short delay give body to the vanished spectre; reveal to his craving ear that which oppressed him in his sleep, and declare its meaning.

On the great plain of Dura—(*Dan.* iii.)—this sublime incarnation of pride sets up an enormous image, and issues his decree that all men, from prince to peasant, shall, at a certain signal, fall down before it and worship. Myriads on myriads, all the pomp and pride, the wealth, learning, and splendour, the great and little meanness of Babylon, crowd to inaugurate that dazzling image. Lo! if not a god, at least it is formed of gold, of which men but too often make both god and king; for there is nothing whose power and influence they are so ready to confess, or that so absorbs their souls and gains their homage. Brilliant, lofty, and not mean in size, this monster fantasy does not

disappoint the public expectation ; it exhibits the wealth of the monarch, and inflames the slavish hearts of his subjects. What saith that blazing herald, whose smallest word, passing from mouth to mouth, will be known by even the meanest in this mighty host. Oh, his tones swell richly with that *ultima ratio* of despotism—the menace of extinction ! A fiery furnace is ready, with its consuming flame, for any who should refuse obedience.

Who could listen to such *honeyed* accents, and doubt either the grandeur of the monarch or the reasonableness of his request ? Applauding baseness raises its vehement shout, the incense that poor slavery offers to its kings. This the sovereign condescends to inhale ; it brings some satisfaction ; but that petrification within, in which he views all his glory reflected, demands a victim that might give a keener zest ; a little drop of rebel acid squeezed into this luscious draught of flattery, would have been grateful to the sated palate. Obedience palls when it is universal ; menace is nothing where nothing resists ; and power grows flat and tame in such an atmosphere, where not even one leaf is seen to rustle. It requires some proof that it is indeed a reality, and this resistance only can afford ; some-

thing that stands erect, and dares it ; fans up its flame, and provokes a momentary glow ; something too feeble to cause any grave inquietude, and yet bold enough for fury to feed upon. The greatest joy a tyrant can experience, is in some high vengeance unalloyed by fear. He will condescend to drink his peculiar pleasure from the cup of the vilest misery ; but when he can take it from a jewelled vase he finds there a nectar, and his lip will dwell on it with a most rich delight.

At the appointed signal, the multitude prostrates itself and adores ! By God, or gold, or King subdued, no creature stands erect ! Yes. *Three* there are who have not bent the knee, or even bowed the head. And they seem to be men of rank and dignity, for they wear the high official garb. They are, perhaps, too high for any one to dare to notice their delinquency. Too high ! Oh, more strong by far the certainty that the gaze of Envy is upon them ; and that her envenomed tongue will not be slow in reporting what her keen eyes have noted. All men have their enemies. There is, perhaps, no living being, however mean or inoffensive, that has not one enemy ; but men in office, men of public mark, have each some bloodhound, sharp in scent,

following in their every footstep, and always at hand, watching for the moment when they may seize their hunted victim by the throat, and bring him down to death and ruin. And thus it is that tyrants *dare* ; thus it is they may calmly slumber. There are a thousand piercing eyes, eyes that never tire, keeping watch on those who serve them ; urged by interest and those vile passions that never can be satisfied while any one desire remains ungratified ; by a thirst never sated, and therefore by a restless, ceaseless pain.

Report of this disobedience is quickly borne to the royal ear. Rage and fury flash in the tyrant's eyes—O that delicious acid !—and he orders the culprits into his immediate presence. They are men of station ; three pertaining to the noble families of Judah, who have been set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Firm and unmoved they stand in his dread presence—there is no trembling, no quailing ; but that noble dignity which only they possess who are ready to defy death. The jewelled vase is at the monarch's lip ; he takes the precious nectar drop by drop. They are not disposed of at once, as meaner persons would have been. He offers mercy ; he will forget ; he will pardon, if they will

fall down and worship! But theirs are not of the craven hearts that are betrayed by fear. Love is in them, and with them; they are among her cherished children; her light is round them; her sweet and precious perfume nerves their vigorous souls. Their calmness augments his fury. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" roars this bloated human pride. What wonder and astonishment pervade that splendid crowd of sycophants and slaves, when, with a tranquility undisturbed by the fiery menace, they firmly, though with deep respect, declare the unyielding purpose of minds strong in obedience to a Superior Power, and willing to leave the issue in His hands. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image that thou hast set up"—(*Dan.* iii. 16, 17).

Behold an example for imitation until remotest time; one of those triumphs of faith that stands out clear, distinct, and impressive. What it enunciates is simple, easily understood, and susceptible of universal application. Where the command of God is unmistakeable and precise, no earthly consideration

should be allowed to make us swerve from obedience to it ; there is no power that can absolve us from it ; and it is our duty to trust in Him, and leave the result to Him, who has a right to both our bodies and our souls ; and to whom we must be prepared in some cases to sacrifice the one, if we would accept His offer to save the other.

Defied by captives ! Not the fierce monsoon playing with some dismasted ship near a rocky shore proclaims more certain death in its wild howl ! “ Heat the furnace seven times hotter.” “ Bind these wretches, and hurl them within its fiery jaws.” So urgent is the command, and so excessive the heat of the furnace, that the men who execute this order, though selected from among the strongest in the army, fall victims to the heated breath. And the doomed, of whom not a vestige should remain when a few short moments have flitted by ? With strange and wondering eyes the awe-struck monarch bounds from his sumptuous throne. What can thus surprise so great, so magnificent a king ? “ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire.” “ Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst, and they have no hurt ; and the form of the fourth is like the *Son of God*.” Yes, Love in human form was there. It was too noble a work to com-

mission an angel to execute. A faith like theirs drew, and will always draw, Love from her throne in heaven. And she made her presence and her human name felt and known by this heathen king. Our beloved Lord, Love incarnate, is within five centuries of the time she has fixed for His advent; and the indications of His person and His work are made more and more evident. This was a revelation to the soul of the monarch, whom she forced to proclaim her power and glory. No fears withhold him, he rushes toward the mouth of the furnace, and, trembling in the presence of the Eternal God, implores these men to come to him. And they obey. They owe him fealty and duty; they are bound to obey him in all that does not dishonour God or debase themselves. The fire has had no power upon them—not one hair of their heads is singed—their garments are untouched—and no smell of fire is upon them. O Love Divine! That heart of heathen pride is for one moment under thy influence, though it remains unchanged—those lips of pride are moved to speak in thine honour, and to command that thy name be not profaned among his subjects, while these three men, who have been so nobly faithful, are raised to higher dignity in his service—(*Dan.* iii. 28, 29).

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE IN THE DEN OF LIONS.

PROUD Babylon rules now no longer. She is no more a queen of cities. The blood-stained sceptre has been wrested from the Chaldean by the hand that God appointed, and the Mede has been for some time enthroned in Babylon. But hearts as vile as any that the Chaldean empire knew, bow to and fawn upon the Median power. Human nature under the bondage of sin, does not change with revolution or with the transfer of dominion. There are always secret foes of the innocent, who smile, and at the same time covertly attack them if they obstruct their path, or possess what they desire. Their garments may be so fair that Malice can find no faulty thread therein, Hatred discover no soil upon them; and they may be so faultless in their duty or their trust that the vulture eye of Envy may watch continuously in vain. But there are loathsome slimy pits in the black human heart that none may sound ;

there is a depth in the ingenuity of evil that may not be fathomed. In Babylon there is now one such innocent and upright man, obnoxious to many of black and evil hearts because he obstructs the paths of their ambition and their greed. They determine that his destruction is necessary to the success of their schemes, and must therefore be accomplished. But how assail a man whose acts may endure the keenest assaults of scrutiny ; whose fair, unblemished life hath no dark place where some secret stain lies hid ; on whom corrupting gold hath no power ; who wears his honours on a gentle breast as things uncared for, not necessary to his existence, externals, strangers to his secret heart, that is always ready to examine and give judgment on itself, viewing itself in the truth-telling glass of holy fear and love, where all appears as it is in the sight of God himself, unobscured by the mists of earthly passions and desires, that sully and distort the thoughts and purposes, the actions, the motives, and the deeds of men ?

Chief of all the princes of the empire, his gaze is however so dangerous to the venal band who find an irresistible charm in the secret bribe, and employ their power to realise their darling dreams of lust,

that he must be got rid of. Death is his allotted portion ; they have no hesitation on this point ; but how is it to be brought about ? There is no spot, no stain, nothing they can denounce. Yet, when was evil slow in finding a door for crime ? Behold one here. Three times a day he bends his aged knees, and, with his face turned toward the demolished Temple of his native land, he prays for help and mercy. And with this they will construct a web for his destruction. They assiduously court the sovereign ; they gratify the vain ears of power with the soft, melodious, sweet-toned notes of flattery ; and the speedy result is that unparalleled decree of royal pride, "That whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man other than of himself, during the space of thirty days, shall be cast into the den of lions"—(*Dan.* vi. 4—9).

They know well the man with whom they have to deal ; they know that no fears will have power in his heart to prevail against the voice of Heavenly Love within his soul, and make him swerve from what he considers to be his duty to his God. He continues his devotions as though that impious decree had never issued—(*Dan.* vi. 10).

The kings of Media have, in their arrogance and

pride, fettered themselves with a law, that a decree once issued must be maintained, however unreasonable, infamous, or cruel it may be. Daniel's supplications to Heaven are denounced, and the immediate application of the penalty demanded from the royal fool, who too late perceives that it was a calculated snare for the man whom he most esteems and loves. He loads himself with keen reproach—his pain and anguish are consuming him ; he knows not how to resist—yet he will not yield ; from mid-day until evening he strives to shield and save—(*Dan.* vi. 11-14)—but while his heart is torn, rent, tortured by remorse, his princes unceasingly urge upon him the irrevocable character of Median law ; they will not lose the prey for which they prepared those meshes—(*Dan.* vi. 15). As the day wanes the monarch's grief becomes almost despair ; but suddenly, amid the desolating gloom, one ray of heavenly light traverses his soul. While looking on that silvery head, tears, precious indeed from such eyes, rolling down his cheeks and revealing the anguish of his heart, he forgets his kingly dignity, and, throwing his arms around that venerable form, he presses the condemned one to his bosom, and prophetic fire throws a gleam of beauty over his tear-

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lumined him ; but, unused to such communion with the Eternal God, its supporting influence has departed ; and though Hope whispers, the voice is faint and rare, while Fear, loud and powerful, thunders in his ears a horrid tale of blood and death. No music pours its voice through his sad halls—(*Dan.* vi. 18). The monstrous discord of that frightful den cannot be forgotten ; it is in his heart, that has no place for harmony to breathe in. “ Let all keep silence.” Food ?—the thought is madness. “ I eat not, drink not ! ” He knows of the murderers’ revel ; he has heard of their joyous exultation ; and broken words of fearful import ever and anon escape his compressed lips. His furrowed brow is dark with awful gloom, that speaks of hideous death. From hall to hall he strides, with that quick tread which, where power uncurbed resides, might well make some hearts tremble. He weeps ; he prays ; now he is silent, motionless, exhausted ; anon his rising figure and his clenched hand give indication of some strong resolve. Strange tumults sweep across his troubled mind : fury, horror, pity roll through him their consuming tide. He has been duped, betrayed, been made their fool ; been *used* by them as their instrument

for murder; and such a murder; the sage he honoured; more, the friend he loved. And they are sneering at his folly, they, his wretched slaves! Imagination plunges into that fearful pit; he shrinks aghast—"Vile wretches! bloody men!" "That head whose noble beauty—" "Villains, ye know not how I loved that man." "King of the world, yet powerless now to save." "But not for vengeance; woe to them who—" "His God! he may be safe." "Was that voice vain that like a ray of light shot through my soul?" "Save—save—oh, save him, Thou—his God!"

In vain the couch is spread, in vain he throws on it his convulsed frame. Sleep dwells not with such thoughts. When will night end? When will the blessed, glorious light of day burst forth on earth, that all these agonising doubts may be dispelled, or—. He is not king while thus the abject slave of that infernal law. Let morning come with certainty—release—and *power*. Exhaustion bends at last those weary, watching eyelids. Slumber throws lightly over him for a little while her mantle. Reason, sense, and sight are held loosely captive in its folds. Imagination now assumes the sway. His chariot rolls resistless through wide hosts of

enemies ; it wheels—it turns—the trampled, the dying, and the dead are strewn in thousands over the ensanguined plain ; the shouts of victory are ringing in his ears, as vanquished myriads fall and shriek and die. But he is on his steed, that, like the wind, bears him away from the battle, the carnage, and the triumph. On, on they fly toward those ponderous heaps of riven stone that mark the cradle of the Median power ; they bound among those strange fantastic, sharp, rived, jagged rocks, with their blasted, brown, unmingled barrenness : the sandy, steep acclivity is strewn with mass on mass enorme, as if Titans here had waged a dreadful war, or two contending oceans striven ; hurling earth's great mountains with resistless force, until shivered into fragments, block from block, rent by an inconceivable concussion ; leaving these drear, chaotic heaps to tell the story of their conflict. A dim, crepuscular, uncertain light scarce serves to show where danger fills the path. Suddenly, trembling, unnerved, transfixed, paralysed, the fiery steed stops motionless ; he stoops—he gazes over the abrupt edge of a deep dark ravine, whose sides seem cleanly cleft, even without the smallest ledge—from out whose gloomy, frightful depths strange,

hideous noises issue, while fiery flaming eyes are gleaming through the darkness. He feels a sense of fear. Ah! What mean those shouts? Wild armed horsemen ride furiously up that rough slope; rebels against their sovereign; they seize—they load with insult—they fling him into that deep dark yawning gulf! Not far he falls. Some power unseen supports him. The view chills all the blood within his veins; but he rests firm, although on air alone. The traitors gnash with rage, as they behold him safely stand. “Some ledge—some rock,” they cry. They bound to slay him. That ravine’s hideous depths await their spring. What sickening yells!—what fearful piercing cries!—what sounds of woe and agony. He feels that fiends are tearing limb from limb; while his own loud laugh rings through the rocky chasm, and he shouts with taunting scorn, “*Fit doom of traitors!*”

With such might these words of exultation burst from out his lips that they break his feverish slumber. A dream! A moment’s awful dream. And yet it had a joy his waking hours never yet had given him—it was a delight excessive!—it was rapture!—“When will bright day appear?”

His chariot waits the minute for his coming;

his blazing steeds are pawing vigorously at the gates of the rejoicing East, where their fiery mane is spreading its bright hairs over the delightful fields of heaven. One golden moment's pause—he comes—up, up he bounds, and gives the expectant earth that kiss of love she so ardently receives, that makes her beauteous bosom glow, sweeps over her fair face, wakes up her music from its slumber, rouses the harmony in her soul, and bids it flow, that the delicious, dancing air may bear it gaily through the re-illuminated sky.

Not long the monarch tarries. A strong, wild tumult of passion is raging in his breast—it does not waste itself in words, it grows with every lagging moment. Rage—hope—despair—oh, that one life has become so precious in his eyes since those long hours of agony, where thought gave to it, and it alone, the entire empire over his mind. Swift steps have brought the king and his eager train to that sealed stone ; yes, eager—for a sovereign's trouble thus clearly shown works with an electric power in the minds of those around him. Quick, the stone is rolled aside. The monarch trembles. The busy fingers of a deep emotion are playing over all his features, and are giving evidence

of what such kings do not often show—a full and a softened heart. Hush!—no—there is not a sound—unbroken stillness reigns in that fell den—he can no longer wait—he must dare the truth, be it what it may! From his lips—but what accents of lamentation—how fraught with terror—how they pierce every listening ear with sadness: “Daniel, oh Daniel—servant of the living God—is thy God—whom thou servest continually—able to deliver thee from the lions”—(*Dan.* vi. 20). “O king, live for ever!”

“It is his voice—he lives! O, what a God to save!” How boundless now the transports that flood the royal heart. No lover, when the yielding maiden, pressed by the voice of passion from her coyness and reserve, bestows on him the sweet promise that his love demands, consents to trust him with the hoarded treasures of her being, to renounce her virgin title and become his wife—could ever know a greater joy than this that swells within the monarch’s heart, and is revealed in those impetuous, broken accents, that fall unconnected, yet full of one only meaning, from his grateful lips. He lives! He lives! And, behold! the risen sun darts one of his glorious rays within that den, and

gilds the blessed head that Love has guarded there. But—no wonder there is a cry of wild surprise—that head is supported by a prostrate beast, the fiercest of the den, but whose fearful eyes are now all tender softness, and whose tongue is licking peacefully his sinewy limbs, extended on the sand with a careless, listless ease ; while those companion terrors are crouching round the saint, forming a living wall about his venerable form, and warming his aged members by their furred heat. Yes ; among these, the greatest furies of their race, he reposes in security, tranquillity, and peace. And why ? Because Love is present. Love was there ; and before the Prophet reached the bottom of the den she had locked their jaws ; they were furious with hunger, she filled them with a plenty that made them peaceful ; she relaxed the sinews of their dreadful paws ; passed over them her beauteous hand ; subdued their acquired nature ; and at her command they are become as were the earliest of their kind, when in that delicious garden, in those sweet days when the love of earth was without a spot or blemish, they bounded to fair Eve for her caress, and felt that there was in the human smile a power of happiness. In that dreadful den, where

the hands of foul and cunning men cast a life so precious, Love shines in brightness and in glory. She brings once more its paradise to earth ; she shows a symbol of the Messiah's reign. As in the ark, or Israel's dwellings in the land of Goshen, her presence triumphs over gloom and night. There is no spot throughout the peopled world that hath known during these last few hours a glory such as that which gilds this frightful den, where angel forms have ministered to the aged saint, and Love hath shed the rapture of her approving smiles ; Love, who can dissipate the dungeon's darkness, and deck the portals of the dreary tomb, twining her roses round its wormy columns, and making pure and redolent its putrid air. Wherever her children may be, though prostrated by the violence of triumphant guilt, though frowned upon by power, though galled with fetters, though their body's life be made a breathing pain, and severed from every earthly bliss they may be environed with hardships that hourly destroy the human frame, yet if they can by faith fix their eyes on Love, her sweet face at once displays to them its soul-inflaming charms. She shouts of joy ; she points them to robes of spotless white ; to shining crowns of gold—to

glorious forms of heavenly beauty. She holds before the eye a brilliant line, the ends of which it vainly seeks to discover—a line all covered over with flowers of wondrous loveliness, which seem, however, to be continually increasing in beauty, lustre, and abundance—in all that can please, delight, and bless as it extends. Her finger touches one small paltry space, whose length—extreme when compared with even what is visible—is not even as an inch to a degree, and where the florets are the smallest and least bright or fair. Behold, she says, all the existence of this earth, from the moment when God created man to that at which heaven shall flee away, and the world be plunged in its baptismal fire, to be made a fitting habitation for the re-embodied spirits of the blessed. What is one individual share of this brief space to that unlimited existence you will obtain through me? For since thou art mine, all thou canst there see, and ten thousandfold beyond, belongs to thee—it is thine own. Thus for her children doth Love impart the splendours of meridian day, to their periods of darkest gloom and trial.

“O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they

have not hurt me—forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt”—(*Dan.* vi. 21, 22).

“He lives! He lives! Was there ever such a God?” The royal joy deserves the name of bliss; it is exceeding; it gushes forth like some bright sparkling stream from a cleft rock; it is radiant like the spray of the fountain, when the glorious light shines upon it, and turns it into diamonds. “Quick—quick—raise him from the den, that I may behold again that loved form, which during this night of anguish shook my soul with terror, when overpowering fears—Daniel!—glory is on his face—it looks as though some brilliant, blazing light were shining through that clear, pellucid, fine, transparent skin!—but he has been with angels! O my joy!—no hurt—because his heart was with his God!”

But while this pure ecstatic glow pervades the royal heart, what horrid clamour fills the vault below! No sooner is the Prophet gone than the hand of Love removes; and all the bloody instincts of their savage race resume in those fell beasts, and with tenfold power, their wonted influence; with ravening roars they demand their prey. Their furious

boundings in that pealing den, recall that dread moment among the visions of the night, when eager traitors plunged into the darkness and found immediate doom in some monstrous unseen jaws. The Prophet has been sent to his home with honour. The softness of the royal heart is gone; all the savageness of the unrestrained eastern despot revives, unmitigated by the presence of any controlling influence. Those broken mutterings during the tortures of the night were but dark foreshadowings of dread deeds to come, even as the first faint, pale, feeble gleam of dawning day, conveys a promise to be realised by the blazing noon. The mandate is not slow to issue—it includes wives and children in the horrid doom; act crowds fast on word—those wailings, groans, and shrieks, those piercing cries, tell that the fearful beasts are revelling in their abundant feast of human flesh, and quenching their burning thirst in human blood—(*Dan.* v. 24).

Is this a warning that while Love guards with an especial tenderness every hair of her dear child, not only do her enemies work their own perdition, but drag wives and children with them into the immeasurable depths of that eternal woe, that pours its unrelenting flood over the sinner's forfeit soul?

CHAPTER XX.

BRIGHT RAYS ANNOUNCE THE COMING GLORY.

THE mighty power of Daniel's God is now ordered to be proclaimed through the wide-extended realm of Persia. "Tremble and fear"—thus runs the edict—tremble and fear before this God of Daniel, who delivereth and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth; for He is the living God, and stedfast for ever; His kingdom shall not be destroyed, His dominion is unto the end—(*Dan.* v. 25-27).

Yes. Gentile kings extol the majesty of Divine Love, and claim for her praise and honour. No longer confined to the narrow limits of Israel and Judea, the fame of the power and love of God resounds through heathen lands. He who holds captive the chosen vase, inhales the matchless perfume it contains, and bows in adoration, although its nature is inconceivable by him, and cannot be known till Love herself in human form reveal the

celestial secret ! But behold how mysterious are the workings of the Almighty hand. Through Judah's dishonour, Gentile despots are brought to propagate the eternal fame ; idolatry is made to pronounce its own reproach, and prepare the way for Divine, triumphant Love !

Cyrus sends back the captives to Judea. They are sent with honour, and assisted by the Persian kings in rebuilding their Temple—(Vide *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*). Gentile and Jew co-operate in raising it ; and although the cloud that filled the former house does not again descend, Love sends the prediction that her presence shall bestow on it an unprecedented glory. “ A little while, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.” “ The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in ”—(*Mal.* iii. 1). “ Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ”—(*Mal.* iv. 2). Blessings shall wait upon the love of God, but sin shall perish from before His face. What though He be valued at a paltry price—(*Zach.* xi. 12, 13)—and the glorious Shepherd smitten, the flock be scattered from the lea—(*Zach.* xiii.)—My little ones shall rejoice in

My fostering care. A cleansing fountain shall purify the land ; Love's sceptre stretch o'er all the animated earth—one Lord, one God, one King—one hope, one end—(*Zach.* xiv.)

A little patch of shade—and we arrive ! The mountain top ! that view, so bright, so wide, so fair ! But, oh, the vast magnificence ! the floods of glory that roll around ! Thus face to face with Love ! What hope that human mind and human hand can bear and estimate and show the light, the beauty, the glory, and the loveliness !

Desert me not, O Love ! It was thou who didst thus tempt my feet to climb. And thou canst make me what thou wilt. Let thy transcendent beauty shine through me, and give me thoughts and words from thine own bright heaven for thy praise, while I attend thy footsteps in thine Incarnation, from Bethlehem to Calvary, and show thee in the clouds of heaven at the great dread day of earthly doom.

END OF VOL. I.

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